

UNIVERSITY OF HULL

**A mixed methods study of Issues Encountered by
Saudi EFL Students in English Academic Writing**

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By

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Abstract

Proficiency in English language skills is very important for university students to be able to learn and succeed in academic studies. Writing skills are one of the most difficult in learning the English language. It is a difficult skill for native speakers of the English language yet the difficulties are greater for learners of English as a foreign language.

This thesis aims to explore the issues encountered by Saudi EFL students in academic writing. It covers and involves all the different educational aspects such as learners' study skills, teaching methods, curricula, teaching practices, and contextual issues that EFL students face in academic writing based on the students' voices and opinions. The study aims to identify which educational aspects are responsible as issues that face Saudi EFL students in academic writing whether singly or in combination.

A sequential exploratory mixed method research design consisting of two phases was employed. The initial phase was a qualitative study followed by a second subsequent quantitative phase which carried the greater emphasis in this research. The data collection took place during the 2016 – 2017 academic year. Interviews were used for the qualitative data and a questionnaire survey was designed for quantitative data. The participants of the study involved 372 EFL students specialising in English studies in the department of foreign languages at Taif University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

A factor analysis revealed that there were five main factors Saudi EFL students encountered in academic writing. The first and most important factor was the inappropriate English writing textbooks and curriculum. The English writing textbooks employed at the department are difficult for students, with a gap perceived between English writing textbooks used in the foundation year and those studied in the foreign languages department. The second factor was writing anxiety. The third factor was teaching methods and practices. The fourth factor focused on contextual issues including class size, and the final factor was English writing proficiency.

Table of Contents

Abstract	II
Table of Contents	III
List of Tables.....	VI
List of figures	VII
1 CHAPTER ONE: Introduction	8
1.1 Introduction	8
1.2 Rationale for the study	10
1.3 Researcher Positionality	13
1.4 Research problem	13
1.5 Aims of the study	16
1.6 Question of the study	16
1.7 The significance of the study	17
1.8 Organisation of the study	17
2 CHAPTER TWO: Educational and Contextual Background	20
2.1 Introduction	20
2.2 The Saudi context: An overview.....	20
2.3 An overview on the Saudi education system	21
2.4 The status of English language education in the Saudi context	23
2.5 The status of English language education in Saudi public schools	29
2.6 The status of English language education in Saudi Higher Education	32
2.7 Summary	33
3 CHAPTER THREE: Literature Review.....	35
3.1 Introduction	35
3.2 Theoretical background of English ESL/ EFL writing	35
3.3 Approaches to teaching ESL/EFL writing.....	37
3.3.1 Product approach	38
3.3.2 Process approach	40
3.3.3 Genre Approach to Teaching Writing	43
3.4 Teaching English Writing Approaches in the Saudi context and at Taif University.....	45
3.5 The nature of writing.....	47
3.6 Definition of academic writing in higher education	49
3.7 The nature of the difficulties and complexity of writing for EFL students	51
3.8 English and Arabic language differences and difficulties in writing	53
3.9 The importance of academic writing in higher education.....	54
3.10 English writing textbooks in Taif University	57
3.10.1 English writing textbooks in preparatory year (foundation year)	57
3.10.2 English writing textbooks at foreign language department	60

3.11	Issues faced by EFL students in academic writing	61
3.11.1	Linguistic Issues of EFL learners of academic writing	63
3.11.2	Psychological Issues of EFL learners of academic writing	72
3.11.3	Teaching practices Issues	79
3.11.4	Contextual issues facing EFL students in academic writing.....	88
3.12	Summary	91
4	CHAPTER FOUR: The Methodology - Philosophical Basis	92
4.1	Introduction	92
4.2	Purpose and Question of the Study	92
4.3	Methodological Overview	93
4.4	Pragmatism	95
4.5	Mixed Methods Approach: Definitions and Justifications	96
4.6	The Study Design: Sequential Exploratory Mixed Method	100
4.6.1	Sequential Exploratory instrument development model.....	101
4.7	Sequential Mixed Methods Framework Design: Strengths and Rationale 102	
4.7.1	Timing.....	104
4.7.2	Weighting / Priority	104
4.8	Research in practice	105
4.8.1	Research Site	105
4.8.2	Qualitative research: phase one	106
4.8.3	Quantitative research: phase two.....	108
4.9	Sampling / population of the study	111
4.9.1	Qualitative sample	111
4.9.2	Quantitative Sample.....	112
4.10	Pilot study	113
4.10.1	Qualitative Interview Piloting	113
4.10.2	Quantitative Questionnaire Piloting	114
4.11	Validity and reliability	115
4.11.1	Validity of qualitative study	115
4.11.2	Validity of quantitative study	117
4.11.3	Reliability	118
4.12	Positionality	119
4.13	Ethical Considerations	121
4.14	Summary	123
5	CHAPTER FIVE: Phase I, Qualitative Data analysis and findings	124
5.1	Introduction	124
5.2	Qualitative Data analysis	124
5.3	The qualitative Findings	125
5.3.1	First theme: English language proficiency.....	126
5.3.2	The second theme: the psychological learner study skills	129
5.3.3	The third theme: Teaching practices.....	130
5.3.4	The fourth theme: writing textbooks	132
5.3.5	The fifth theme: the contextual issues	134

5.4	Summary	135
6	CHAPTER SIX: Phase II, Quantitative Data analysis and findings	136
6.1	Introduction	136
6.2	Demographic Findings.....	136
6.3	Factor analysis	137
6.4	Descriptive analysis.....	143
6.4.1	Cross- Tabulation Statistical Analysis	144
6.4.2	One way ANOVA Statistical Test.....	171
6.5	Summary	172
7	CHAPTER SEVEN: Discussion of the Integrated Findings	174
7.1	Introduction	174
7.2	The Main Factors of the Current Study:	174
7.2.1	The English writing textbooks factor	175
7.2.2	Writing anxiety factor.....	180
7.2.3	Teaching Practices Factor	183
7.2.4	Class size factor.....	187
7.2.5	English writing proficiency factor.....	189
7.3	Summary	192
8	CHAPTER EIGHT: Conclusion and Recommendations.....	193
8.1	Introduction	193
8.2	Aims, Participants, Data Collection and the main findings	193
8.2.1	Aims and questions of the Study	193
8.2.2	Participants and Data Collection	193
8.2.3	The main findings of the current study:.....	193
8.3	Contributions of the Research.....	195
8.4	Limitations of this study	197
8.5	Recommendations of the study.....	197
8.6	Implications for Further Studies.....	199
8.7	Summary of the Thesis	200
	References	201
	Appendix	229

List of Tables

TABLE 2. 1: THE FIVE CATEGORIES OF KSA’S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM.....	22
FIGURE 4. 1: SEQUENTIAL EXPLORATORY MIXED METHOD DESIGN.....	101
FIGURE 4. 2: SEQUENTIAL EXPLORATORY INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT MODEL.....	101
TABLE 4. 1 : PHASES OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS (BRAUN & CLARKE, 2006)	108
TABLE 4. 2 : THE QUESTIONNAIRE SECTIONS HEADINGS OF THEMES AND SUB-THEMES..	109
TABLE 4. 3 : INTERNAL CONSISTENCY OF CRONBACH’S ALPHA	118
TABLE 5. 1 : THEMES EMERGING FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW	125
TABLE 5. 2 : MAIN AND SUB THEMES EMERGED FROM INTERVIEWS	126
TABLE 6. 1: DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE ACCORDING TO AGE AND ACADEMIC YEAR	137
TABLE 6. 3: ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX SHOWING A 5 FACTOR SOLUTION.....	138
TABLE 6. 4: FACTOR NAMES AND VARIABLES NUMBERS WITH RELIABILITY	139
TABLE 6. 5: ENGLISH WRITING TEXTBOOKS: FACTOR AND VARIABLES	139
TABLE 6. 6: WRITING ANXIETY: FACTOR AND VARIABLES	140
TABLE 6. 7: THE TEACHING METHODS PRACTICES: FACTOR AND VARIABLES	141
TABLE 6. 8: LARGE CLASSES OR CLASS SIZE: FACTOR AND VARIABLES	142
TABLE 6. 9: ENGLISH WRITING PROFICIENCY: FACTOR AND VARIABLES	142
TABLE 6. 10: ENGLISH WRITING TEXTBOOKS.....	144
TABLE 6. 11: FACTOR 1, ENGLISH WRITING TEXTBOOKS	145
TABLE 6. 12: FACTOR 1, ENGLISH WRITING TEXTBOOKS	146
TABLE 6. 13: FACTOR 1, ENGLISH WRITING TEXTBOOKS	147
TABLE 6. 14: FACTOR 1, ENGLISH WRITING TEXTBOOKS	148
TABLE 6. 15: FACTOR 1, ENGLISH WRITING TEXTBOOKS	149
TABLE 6. 16: FACTOR 1, ENGLISH WRITING TEXTBOOKS	150
TABLE 6. 17: FACTOR 2, ENGLISH WRITING ANXIETY	151
TABLE 6. 18: FACTOR 2, ENGLISH WRITING ANXIETY	152
TABLE 6. 19: FACTOR 2, ENGLISH WRITING ANXIETY	153
TABLE 6. 20: FACTOR 2, ENGLISH WRITING ANXIETY	154
TABLE 6. 21: FACTOR 2, ENGLISH WRITING ANXIETY	155
TABLE 6. 22: FACTOR 3, ENGLISH WRITING TEACHING PRACTICES	157
TABLE 6. 23: FACTOR 3, ENGLISH WRITING TEACHING PRACTICES	158
TABLE 6. 24: FACTOR 3, ENGLISH WRITING TEACHING PRACTICES	159
TABLE 6. 25: FACTOR 3, ENGLISH WRITING TEACHING PRACTICES	160
TABLE 6. 26: FACTOR 3, ENGLISH WRITING TEACHING PRACTICES	161
TABLE 6. 27: FACTOR 3, ENGLISH WRITING TEACHING PRACTICES	162
TABLE 6. 28: FACTOR 4, ENGLISH WRITING CLASS SIZE	163
TABLE 6. 29: FACTOR 4, ENGLISH WRITING CLASS SIZE	164
TABLE 6. 30: FACTOR 4, ENGLISH WRITING CLASS SIZE	165
TABLE 6. 31: FACTOR 4, ENGLISH WRITING CLASS SIZE	166
TABLE 6. 32: FACTOR 5, ENGLISH WRITING PROFICIENCY FACTOR	167
TABLE 6. 33: FACTOR 5, ENGLISH WRITING PROFICIENCY FACTOR	168
TABLE 6. 34: FACTOR 5, ENGLISH WRITING PROFICIENCY FACTOR	169
TABLE 6. 35: MULTIPLE COMPARISONS ONE WAY ANOVA TEST	171

List of figures

FIGURE 4. 1: SEQUENTIAL EXPLORATORY MIXED METHOD DESIGN.....	101
FIGURE 4. 2: SEQUENTIAL EXPLORATORY INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT MODEL.....	101

List of Abbreviations

ALM	The audio-lingual method
CDCO	The Curriculum Department at the Central Office
CELTA	Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
DELTA	Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
EAP	English for academic purposes
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a second language
HE	Higher Education
KAUST	King Abdullah University of Science and Technology
KSA	The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
KSU	King Saud University
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHE	Ministry Of Higher Education
NES	Native English Speakers
PY	Preparatory Year
SELEP	Saudi English Language Education Policies
SPS	the Scholarship Preparation School
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SWS	Self-efficacy in Writing Scale
USA	United States of America
WAT	Writing Apprehension Test
WAQ	Questionnaire on attitudes towards writing
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science

1 CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The English language was introduced to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a foreign language by the Department of Education in 1925 (Al-Ahaydib, 1986). However, English language education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has seen two main stages. In the first stage English language education was neglected from both the country and Saudi society. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has recently paid more attention to English language education, as this field was not a priority for either the country or Saudi society in the past. Many students from both high schools and universities had only a little knowledge of the English language in general and English writing in particular.

The second stage started at the beginning of 2002, when the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia determined to make serious changes in order to develop all sectors in the country, and the development of English language education became a priority for both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education. This was because of the importance of the English language in education which is considered the language of science and technology, and also the language of knowledge and communications between nations. As a consequence of serious concerns about the progress of the education sector in general and developing English language education in particular which is related to this study, universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, particularly English language departments and centres, exerted their efforts to develop all aspects of English language education.

My particular interest in this study is focused on EFL academic writing development which is one of the main important skills of the English language that EFL students need. It was recognised, in Saudi universities in particular, that teaching and learning the English language in general and academic writing specifically was very important and one of the issues that needed to be addressed for the sake of English language education development in Saudi higher education.

Learning academic writing is a crucial demand for students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in order for them to cope with their studies and for researchers to

participate in the academic and scientific developments in their fields. English academic writing has become an academic and professional communication tool all over the world. It has been claimed that more than 65% of professional international journal articles are published in English (Hess & Ghawi, 1997). In addition, Schmied (2011) stated that academic writing is very important in general, and particularly important as a part of the academic language community. Tahaineh (2010) explained that writing is an important skill for university students because they have to use it for essay writing, answering written questions and composition writing. It is important for undergraduate and postgraduate students whose major is English and who need to answer subjective questions related to their literature and linguistics courses, as these questions need to be answered in the form of multiple paragraphs with explanations. Therefore, students' ability to master these writing skills will be reflected when they graduate as English language teachers. Furthermore, John (2003) mentioned that success in any field which requires academic writing depends on students' abilities to deal with different writing genres, such as summaries, essays and reviews. The ability of students to write is also considered as a major indicator of their academic potential and success within a number of tertiary institutions (Jones, 1999). Thus, several scholars in the field of academic writing have argued that learning in general can be improved and promoted through writing (Bacha, 2002; Ellis, 2004; Ellis, Taylor & Drury, 2005; Krause, 2001; Lillis, 2001; Manchón & Roca de Larios, 2007; Zamel, 1998).

However, writing can be difficult in a writer's first language; thus, this difficulty increases for the writer in a second language. Academic English writing is challenging and difficult for most native speakers and it is more difficult for EFL students at the advanced level in university, particularly for students who have a completely different linguistic system and cultural background. However, if these issues are addressed appropriately, and EFL writing instructors have taken these issues into consideration by giving EFL students' writing more attention and by teaching them effectively, then learners will succeed in their writing endeavours (Silva, 1993). Moreover, it can be said that writing is a more complicated skill than the other language skills as a means of communication, because it requires more time to produce, as well as critical thinking and concentration. Kormos (2012) illustrates that to express an idea orally is much easier and faster than writing the thought as text, as producing 100 words orally might take about one minute in a Second Language (L2), whereas writing a composition of 100 words might take 30 minutes. Therefore, it is crucial for English writing teachers

and policy makers in higher education (HE) who are interested in teaching and learning academic writing and those responsible for students' writing development to be aware of and keep pace with the current institutional practices and research (Lillis, 2002). They can then provide a critique of student writing and writing pedagogy in higher education (HE) in order to develop English academic writing in their own contexts (Lillis, 2002). Thus, to be able to develop academic writing in a target context, those responsible need to make sure of students' knowledge of different ways of writing for different readers. In terms of the academic writing content of their courses and the proper approaches to teaching writing in accordance with their social context, teachers need awareness of students' needs of what to exclude, rather than include. A number of studies related to Arab EFL students have reported that those who are studying English in higher education suffer from serious difficulties in English language writing in particular, which affects the success of their higher studies (Bacha, 2002; Khalil, 2000; Kharma & Hajjaj, 1997; Rababah, 2003; Tahaineh, 2010).

To date, most studies conducted in the Arab world and in the Saudi context tackled academic writing challenges and difficulties from only two specific perspectives for example, teachers' feedback and refer it to teaching methodology or grammatical errors, and the students' lack of knowledge and refer it to language proficiency. However, it may be that issues facing EFL students in academic writing might be coming from different educational aspects (e.g. curricula, teaching methods, learners' linguistics and psychological study skills, contextual and environmental aspects). Therefore, the gap this study attempts to address is exploring the issues encountered by Saudi EFL students in academic writing at Taif University in order to identify which of the educational aspects affect the academic writing of Saudi EFL students.

1.2 Rationale for the study

The academic writing skill is difficult for native speakers and is even more difficult for second language (L2) learners. This is why a number of studies have been conducted to demonstrate the problems faced when writing and to do their utmost to find solutions to solving or at least reducing the degree of difficulty for both native and non-native learners of English writing skills (Al Fadda, 2012; Ferris & Hedgecock, 2005; Grami, 2010; Hinkel, 2004; Leki & Carson, 1997; Silva, 1993). Issues facing EFL students in academic writing are not restricted to Saudi EFL students. Any other EFL students

dealing with English writing as a foreign language may also face issues with academic writing.

To the best of my knowledge, several studies conducted in KSA and the Arab world reveal that EFL students who study in institutions using English as a medium of instruction suffer from deficiencies in writing skills and as a result their academic progress is hindered. It is also reported that in the Arab world, as in other EFL contexts, EFL students have poor English and face problems with English language skills in general and writing skill in particular. Many studies on the difficulties of the English language have found that the English writing skill is the most difficult skill to learn (Abdul Haq, 1982; Khuwaileh, & Al-Shoumali, 2000; Al-Hazmi, 2006; Al-Samdani, 2010; Grami, 2010; Ezza, 2010; Tahaineh, 2010; Rababah, 2003; Bacha, 2002; Kharma & Hajjaj, 1997; Javid, Farooq, & Gulzar, 2012; Al-Jarf, 2008; Rababah, 2003). However, most of the studies conducted on EFL academic writing in Saudi Arabia are related to syntactical and grammatical writing usages and applications such as the incorrect use of verbs and prepositions, and the structural aspects of writing (Mohammad, 2005; Mourtaga, 2004; Zahid, 2006; Al-Hazmi, 2003; Asiri, 1996; Bersamina, 2009). Furthermore, according to Hashim, (1996) who reviewed several studies concerning in EFL writing by Arab students, these studies were mainly concentrated on syntactical issues which could be categorised as seven syntactical and grammatical errors: prepositions, verbs, articles, conjunctions, relative clauses, adverbial clauses, and sentence structure. In line with this, Tahaineh (2010) stated that most of the errors in Arab students' EFL writing fall in the category of syntax and grammar. Thus, there is a considerable focus on syntactical and grammatical formations in academic writing at the expense of other aspects. In contrast, only a few researchers have conducted studies specialising in different issues affecting students in academic writing rather than the syntactical and grammatical formations e.g. Grami, (2010) who investigated the benefit of EFL teachers' feedback on writing performance, e.g. Aljafen, (2013) who conducted a study about the writing anxiety of EFL undergraduate students or e.g. studies about Arabic and English language interference (Al-Jarf, 2008; Bacha, 2002). Moreover, Al-Khairy, (2013) conducted a study about academic writing problems of Saudi English major students. The study concentrated more on linguistic issues such as grammatical errors, and the lack of knowledge on how to write different kinds of essays.

However, a small number of papers about writing focused mostly on linguistic issues but these were not comprehensive studies and some of them related to postgraduate students, for example, Al Fadda, (2012) conducted a study on the academic writing difficulties of King Saud postgraduate students. This focused on different aspects of academic writing such as difficulties in using conjunctions in academic writing, which are categorised as grammatical and syntactical usage in academic writing. In the same regard, Javid & Umer (2014) conducted a study investigating Saudi EFL writing problems. The study focused on and examined grammatical and syntactical aspects in addition to some of the academic writing skills (summarising, writing reports, types of essay writing) and also recommended that further studies should be conducted to explore and tackle different issues that students might face. Additionally, some researchers (e.g. Al-Shabanah, 2005; Al Fadda, 2012) recommended that further studies be conducted on specific issues of academic writing skills such as, note taking, summarising, reporting, essay research, paraphrasing, and types of citations and referencing. Al-Shabanah (2005) reported that English EFL instructors continuously complain about the lack of knowledge and certain skills necessary for academic writing among non-native speakers of English. Some of these skills involve outlining, paraphrasing, and summarizing. Moreover, Al Fadda, (2012) recommended that further studies be conducted on other types of academic writing skill such as the appropriate attribution of resources, referencing and using Endnote. However, different issues related to academic writing which are not covered might be faced by EFL students. This means, there has been no comprehensive study tackling EFL academic writing including different educational aspects and issues, such as learners' study skills, teaching methods, curricula, teaching practices, and academic contextual aspects exploring what EFL students are facing as difficulties in academic writing development.

Many studies conducted in Arabs and Saudi context (e.g. Alfaki, 2015; Al-Hammadi and Sidek, 2015; Al-Sawalha and Chow, 2012; Tahaineh, 2009; Abdallah, 2000; Mohammad, 2005; Mourtaga, 2004; Zahid, 2006; Al-Hazmi, 2003; Asiri, 1996; Bersamina, 2009; Hashim, 1996) have placed more focus on grammatical and syntactical aspects at the expense of other aspects which might influence issues in academic writing for Saudi EFL students. Therefore, the current study is intended to be a more comprehensive investigation of issues encountered by Saudi EFL students in academic writing exploring and covering whatever EFL student face in academic writing. This will involve all the different educational aspects such as learners' study

skills, teaching methods, curricula, teaching practices, and contextual and environmental issues based on the students' voices and opinions. In this way the study aims to identify which educational aspects, are more responsible as issues that face Saudi EFL students in academic writing because it could be that students face more than one issue in academic writing, and so this needs to be explored and addressed.

1.3 Research Positionality

I was an English teacher for seven years in the Ministry of Education and an English lecturer at Taif University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. For this research, my positionality makes me both an insider and an outsider. As a Saudi national and employee at Taif University, I have the advantages of speaking and writing Arabic, and know the university system first hand. I have been away from Taif University for the last 5 years and so in relation to the students who participated in the interviews and survey, I am not known to them and so I am something of an outsider. I have noticed that academic writing is nearly always a problem for Saudi EFL undergraduate students and that their academic writing at Taif University is below standard when I corrected their written exams. Therefore, I would like to investigate the issues encountered by Saudi EFL students in academic writing at Taif University. I am particularly concerned about representing EFL students' own experiences and voices regarding issues they have faced in their academic writing at Taif University, as well as identifying the main educational aspects that influence the academic writing of Saudi EFL students which might affect their writing performance.

1.4 Research problem

English academic writing is an important skill to learn and is considered as one of the most difficult skills in learning a foreign language and, therefore, acquiring this skill seems to be more demanding than the other three language skills (reading, speaking and listening) (Zheng, 1999). EFL writing skill is also considered a challenge for EFL students because of the differences between English language writing structure and style and those of other languages (Nunan, 1999). Therefore, EFL students are required to make a great deal of effort to be able to recognise and manage these differences while they are writing (Leki, 1991). This is particularly true of the Arab EFL students who are learning English academic writing (e.g. McMullen, 2009; Ahmed, 2010).

Saudi English language learners (EFL) face a challenge in terms of learning English L2 writing skills (McMullen, 2009). The educational systems in many Arabic countries, including Saudi Arabia, focus on teaching and learning the writing skills required for taking examinations. For many EFL students, the reason for learning EFL writing is to pass examinations or to gain a good grade on courses. This approach has influenced the teaching and learning of academic writing and also reduces the value of such writing, in that students are not keen or willing to develop their academic writing skills and so restrict their view of the purposes of writing (Ahmed, 2010). This approach to teaching academic writing for examinations is causing students to lose interest in writing and the process becomes not beneficial and artificial, giving them no real sense of purpose (see, e.g. El-Hibir & Al-Taha, 1992; Khalil, 1985 and Sa'adeddin, 1989). Furthermore, the fact that in the Saudi context the use of traditional ways of teaching English, deals with university students as if they are still in high school when they are, in fact, university-level students. In other words, teachers give students a great deal of information to be copied or imitated and then test them in mid-term and in final examinations, expecting a piece of writing from the students without grammatical mistakes and answering the target questions provided (Muhammad, 2005; Muortaga, 2004; Zahid, 2006; Al-Hazmi, 2003; Asiri, 1996; Bersamina, 2009). As a consequence, the teaching and learning of academic writing skills in most of the Saudi contexts results in students only producing a piece of writing without any syntactical and grammatical errors with just a few other academic writing skills if needed. The students' main concern is to provide a piece of writing without grammatical errors paying no attention to other aspects of academic writing skills such as structure, styles and different kinds of essay writing. As a result, university-level students have always complained of a lack of knowledge regarding using the different skills of academic writing. In this regard, Al-Shabanah (2005) reports that English language instructors continually complain about the lack of knowledge and certain skills necessary for academic writing among non-native speakers of English. In addition, Al-Humaidi (2008) mentioned that the Saudi English teaching system produces learners who are considered 'bad' writers and who are not able to use the language communicatively. Therefore, there is considerable focus on syntactical and grammatical formations in academic writing at the expense of other writing issues that Saudi EFL students might face.

The need for the current study in the Saudi context arises from the following. First, the Department of English Language at Taif University is trying to improve the outcomes of its students and to deal with any issues they face or that might occur in the future.

Second, the researcher is a teacher in the English Department and has realised that Saudi students in the Department of English Language have difficulties in producing different kinds of academic writing in English preferring multiple choice questions rather than open ended questions which could lead them into making mistakes. Despite studying a number of English writing courses in the department after the foundation year, such as Writing I, Writing II and English for Academic Purposes, students still face difficulties in producing an acceptable piece of writing with a variety of different kinds of academic writing skills that they were supposed to have mastered in the second year or the third year of their academic studies.

Third, the students also complained about a lack of knowledge of academic writing skills. Fourthly, most of the published papers and studies concentrated on the grammatical and syntactical aspects of second language education only neglecting the other aspects which might be the cause of the difficulties in learning EFL writing. Finally, an insufficient number of small studies have addressed the issues that face EFL undergraduate students in using academic writing skills, including all the important educational aspects of learning English as a foreign language, such as the curricula, teaching methods, learners' study skills and the academic context and environment, which might cause serious issues for students regarding academic writing.

The aforementioned reasons indicate that there is a significant research gap in this area that should be addressed. Therefore, the current study is intended to be a comprehensive investigation of issues encountered by Saudi EFL students in academic writing exploring and covering whatever EFL student face in academic writing. This involves all the different educational aspects such as learners' study skills, curricula, teaching practices, and academic contextual issues based on the students' voice and opinions. This will help in identifying which educational aspects are more responsible as issues that face Saudi EFL students in academic writing, because it could be more than one issue which students face in academic writing. Additionally, any other embedded issues that need to be explored can be addressed. The study is also intended to offer recommendations and, based on its findings, to outline the implications that might contribute to developing academic writing skills, not only in the Saudi and Arabic

contexts, but also in similar contexts and in the field of academic writing education in general.

1.5 Aims of the study

According to the review of previous studies, there are a number of issues facing EFL students in academic writing. Some of these issues are related to the curricula, while others are connected to teaching methods or to learners' study knowledge, or to the academic contextual issues. There has also been no comprehensive study exploring the academic writing issues that face Saudi EFL students. Therefore, taking into consideration the needs of Saudi EFL undergraduate students in academic writing skills, the overall aim of this study is to explore the academic writing issues that face Saudi EFL students. This will involve all the different educational aspects such as learners' study skills, teaching practices, curricula, and contextual issues, based on the students' voice and opinions according to what they really faced and experienced as issues which hindered them in academic writing.

1.6 Question of the study

The main study question is:

What are the issues encountered by Saudi EFL students in academic writing at Taif University in Saudi Arabia?

This is addressed throughout by several sub – questions as follows:

- a) How is the teaching of English as a foreign language conducted in Saudi Arabia, particularly the writing component?
- b) What are the special characteristics of the Saudi Higher Education context for academic writing in English as a foreign language?
- c) What are the issues identified in the literature which face EFL students in academic writing?
- d) What is the most appropriate way to research issues facing EFL students in English academic writing?
- e) What are the issues facing Saudi EFL students in academic writing at Taif University?
- f) Are there any significant differences in the influence of the different issues on three academic year groups of students in academic writing?

1.7 The significance of the study

There is a relative lack of research on academic writing issues facing EFL students in the Saudi context. Addressing this could play an important role in developing the academic writing skills of EFL students in general and Saudi EFL students in particular. Thus, this research will focus on academic writing issues, as only a few papers, and not many comprehensive Master's or PhD research dissertations have been written about this in the Saudi context.

This research will explore issues that face Saudi students in academic writing based on the students' voice and opinions, in order to identify which educational aspects, are responsible as issues that faced Saudi EFL students in academic writing. It could be that there is more than one issue facing students in academic writing or there may be other embedded issues which need to be explored and addressed. In other words, the causes of problems with academic writing might come from the curricula, rather than the teaching methods, or might come from both.

The results of the research will, it is hoped, lead to recommendations and a consideration of the implications of potential remedies in overcoming the difficulties in L2 teaching and learning academic writing skills, or at least in reducing them.

The outcome of this research will, it is hoped, be beneficial not only to Taif University, but also to all English language institutions that teach English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia in particular and possibly to other similar contexts in general, and ultimately to the students who have often struggled to write well in English.

1.8 Organisation of the study

The thesis will be arranged in eight chapters.

Chapter One: Introduction

The first chapter is the introduction, and has presented a statement of the problem of the study, the rationale behind the research, an outline of the researcher's positionality, the aims of the study, the study questions and the significance of the study.

Chapter Two: Educational and contextual background

This chapter is about the educational and contextual background of the Saudi Arabian context. This part of the study will consider English teaching and learning in higher

education (HE) and the characteristics of English language education in the Saudi context of EFL writing. This addresses the first sub question.

Chapter three: Literature Review

The literature review, as its name indicates, presents a review of the various issues related to the topic of the study. The literature review will address the second and third research sub- questions. The main topics to be covered relate to the research and the study question will be divided into two parts: the first part will be concerned with the nature of writing, the definition of academic writing, the natural difficulties with academic writing, and the importance of teaching and learning academic writing skills, and will include the different approaches to, and methods of, teaching English writing. The second part will consider the academic writing issues facing EFL students in general and the academic writing issues facing EFL students in the Saudi context in particular.

Chapter four: Methodology

The fourth chapter presents the methodology of the research where the researcher outlines how the research will be conducted. The researcher of this study adopted a sequential exploratory mixed method design which will be presented in this chapter and the data collection procedures of both qualitative and quantitative phases. This chapter will answer the fourth sub question, which is (What is the most appropriate way to research issues facing EFL students in English academic writing?).

Chapter five: qualitative study (phase one)

Chapter five will provide information in detail about the qualitative part of the study as phase I. This includes the data analyses and the findings of the qualitative part.

Chapter six: quantitative study (phase two)

Chapter six will provide information in detail about the quantitative part of the study as phase II. This includes the data analyses and the findings of the quantitative part of the study. These two chapters (five and six) answer the fifth and sixth sub questions.

Chapter seven: Discussion

The seventh chapter presents a discussion of the study findings. It will cover the findings of the previous chapters and relate them to previous studies reviewed in the literature chapter. The attention then moves to the main research question and the researcher will attempt to address it according to the findings.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

The eighth chapter presents the conclusion and offers recommendations for further research. This chapter will contain a summary of the research undertaken, its implications for EFL teaching and learning issues with regard to academic writing skills. The limitations of this study, suggestions for future research and self-reflection will also be presented in this chapter.

2 CHAPTER TWO: Educational and Contextual Background

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the main objective is giving general ideas about the processes of English education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) since 1932. Thus, a general overview of the Saudi context will be presented. The first section (2.1) presents a brief background of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in general. Section two (2.2) presents an overview of the education system in Saudi Arabia including the policy and the system of both The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education. In section (2.3) the status of English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is discussed presenting the factors that negatively and positively affect English language education all over the country. Section four (2.4) discusses the status of English language education in Saudi public schools from different historical and cultural perspectives presenting the development the English education over time. Finally, a spotlight on the status of English in Saudi higher education is presented in section five (2.5) including the general academic systems and policies in the Saudi universities.

2.2 The Saudi context: An overview.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) was established as a Kingdom in 1932. It is an Arabian country sometimes called "The Land of the Two Holy Mosques". The Two Holy Mosques at Makkah and Medinah give The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia a great religious significance for all Muslims all over the world. Geographically, KSA is a large country with an area of over 2 million square kilometers. It is twice the size of Egypt and approximately one-third the size of Europe. The country of Saudi Arabia is situated in south-west Asia, occupying most of the Arabian Peninsula and is considered the largest country in the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf. Most of the land of the country is deserts. The country is surrounded by seas from three directions west, east and south. It has no permanent rivers. The capital city of Saudi Arabia is Riyadh situated in the centre of the country (Smith, Abouammoh, and Duwais, 2014). The fundamental law which operates in Saudi Arabia is Islamic Law (the Shariah) which is primarily derived from the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* – the teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad. The Shariah provides the principles, rules and regulations that guide all aspects of Muslim life (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013).

The recent estimated population of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is over 30 million, 20 million are Saudi nationals and 10 million are expatriates based on predictions (The Central Department of statistics & Information, 2015). Up to 98% of the people ethnically are Arab and 99% of them follow the Islamic faith. The official language of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is Arabic. (Elyas, 2011). Economically, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of the largest producers and exporters of oil and petroleum products in the world and depends on this natural resource as the main income of the country. A significantly increased number of unemployed Saudis led to a "Saudization" programme introduced in 1990, to replace the large numbers of ex-patriate workers employed in Saudi businesses with Saudi workers. The Saudization policy particularly targets the large number of young Saudis who will be entering the job market in the near future which as a result adds pressure for them to learn English (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013).

2.3 An overview on the Saudi education system

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is a vast country covering an area of more than 2,000,000 km² in which huge cities and villages are structured as per their location. Some of the areas of Saudi Arabia are structured in complicated natural environments and lack appropriate transportation systems so they are unable to communicate with the major cities and thus, cannot reach the schools and universities located there. The educational attainment of Saudi Arabia was quite low till the middle of the 20th century, due to the deficiency of educational institutions in remote areas. The administration of the educational system in Saudi Arabia is exceedingly centralised. Thus, the government controlled all educational policies under the supervision of The Supreme Committee for Educational Policy established in 1963 which acts as the highest authority responsible for all educational affairs like curriculum, syllabuses, textbooks and even the uniform all over the country. The educational affairs are under the regulation of four principal authorities (Al-Shumaimeri, 2003),

- i) The Ministry of Higher Education
- ii) The Ministry of Education
- iii) The Ministry of Municipal & Rural Affairs
- iv) The General Organisation of Technical Education and Vocational Training.

Also, there are five categories of educational system in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia (see table 2.1) below.

Table 2. 1: The five categories of KSA’s educational system

<u>Stage.</u>	<u>AGE GROUPS</u>	<u>DESCRIPTIONS</u>
1.	3 – 6	Kindergarten
2.	6 – 11	Elementary Level
3.	12 – 14	Intermediate Level
4.	15 – 18	Secondary Level
5.	19 – 24	University Level

In 1953 and 1959, when the Ministry of Education and the General Presidency of Female Education were established respectively, the status of education started to be transformed and later on, these two bodies merged to work as a single ministry, The Ministry of Education (Al-Sayegh, 2009). During the time period of 1953-70, after the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia the number of schools significantly increased. The teachers’ preparation institute, schools for girls and boys rose from 511 and 290 to 7000 and 2722 respectively with the enrolled number of students increasing to 401,000 (ibid). There are three stages of the government schools in the KSA:

- 1. Primary School (Elementary Level):** This level consists of a total of six grades (1 - 6) and students get admission in grade I at the age of 6.
- 2. Intermediate School (Intermediate Level):** This level embraces three grades (7-9).
- 3. Secondary School:** This level includes the final three grades (10-12) in the public school before graduating. (Al-Sayegh, 2009).

In 1975, The Ministry of Higher Education in KSA was established. The main role of The Ministry of Higher Education is to supervise and regulate universities and other higher educational institutions. The basis of the Higher Education of Saudi Arabia was laid on four key characteristics, as elaborated by Smith & Abouammoh (2013). The first is the teachings of Islam are to be given significance and acted upon. The second characteristic is the establishment of a centralized system of educational support and control. The third characteristic is that every educational level should be financed by the government. The fourth characteristic is a basic policy of gender segregation.

In 1957, the first university founded in Riyadh, KSA was the King Saud University (KSU) which is the largest university of Saudi Arabia in contemporary times and ranked as 221st in the Times Higher Education- QS World University Rankings i.e. the highest ranking ever known for any Arab university. In the last decade, 17 government universities were established while additionally private universities were founded demonstrating the huge financial effort of the government in the education sector. 4.5% of all higher education is made of private universities. For the purpose of fostering development in the educational sector, considering the significance of education for boys and girls, the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Education have implemented certain fruitful strategies, increasing the number of public universities and encouraging private universities for educational development purposes. As a result of their efforts the number of student admissions has increased since their establishment (Alhaisoni & ur Rahman, 2013). Currently, educational institutions have increased in number and today, 25,000 schools, 30 government universities, 13 private universities are being operated in the KSA (mohe.gov.sa).

King Salman became the leader of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia after the death of his brother and previous king, King Abdullah in 2015. King Salman worked towards this development by merging the ministries of education and higher education in one single body which maintained previous principles, rules and regulations.

2.4 The status of English language education in the Saudi context

Arabic is the official language of Saudi Arabia whereas English is treated and taught as a foreign language. In 1928, the teaching of English was introduced in the Saudi Arabian Educational System. This action was one of the basic steps as it was laid down several years after the establishment of The Directorate of Education in 1923 (Al-Seghayer, 2005). The educational system has since been transformed. English is emphasized over certain other subjects since it is also recognized in a number of important sectors in Saudi Arabia. The present status that the English language has in Saudi Arabia is merely because of the development taking place in several ways. This perceived growing position of English is in response to the development of Saudi Arabia in a variety of ways, reflecting social developments and the swift rate of change. Specifically economic growth in the commercial and industrial sectors means that Education has been given increased importance. (Al-Seghayer, 2014).

In accordance with the cultural and social aspects, Saudi Arabia differs from other countries and this is why it is quite complicated to teach English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, teaching English as a foreign language requires experience and specialization for many reasons which are linked with economy, psychology, pedagogy, education, philosophy, and socio-cultural purposes which need to be satisfied and fulfilled. Similarly, a hindrance regarding teaching the English language is that English is not commonly used as an everyday language in the KSA. It is merely utilised in formal organisations like the industrial, educational and medical sectors. Thus, teaching, learning and using English is not particularly common in Saudi society and serves very limited purposes, and therefore English language learners have little opportunity to practise the English language outside the classroom (Intakhab Alam Khan, 2011).

During the Kingdom's history, there have been many positive and negative factors that have had major roles and effects on teaching English in Saudi Arabia. Some of these factors were social, religious, economic, educational and political factors. There were anti-English Saudis who stood against teaching English in Saudi Arabia. However, Faruk, (2014) stated that Saudi English Language Education Policies (SELEP) succeeded in dealing with and persuading the anti-English Saudis to accept English.

One of the main factors that negatively affected teaching English in Saudi Arabia was the negative attitude of the society to teaching or learning a foreign language (Al-Saddat & Al-Ghamdi, 2002). Saudi society has had a negative attitude towards learning a foreign language. The society was also pessimistic in the perceptions of teaching or learning English as a foreign language or any other language and created obstructions to frustrate as much as they could. The initial foreign language taught in Saudi Arabia was Turkish during the control and influence of the Ottoman Empire in several parts of the Arabian Peninsula. At that time, Ottoman led governance of schools was present in the Arabian Peninsula (now known as Saudi Arabia) but Saudi society did not accept these schools as the language medium offered in those schools was Turkish (regarded as the intimidators' and invaders' language) (Al-Saddat & Al-Ghamdi, 2002). The Turkish language was banished from Saudi Arabia soon after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire between 1914 and 1918. The official language and mother tongue of Saudi Arabia is the Arabic language and some were concerned that teaching English would affect the mother tongue. Scholars and policy makers present in Saudi Arabia wanted to

be assured of the primacy of the Arabic language in Saudi Arabia and to be certain there would be no negative influences on the mother tongue while introducing English in public schools. Therefore, the English language has been monitored by, and sometimes has come under criticism from, some anti-English people as well as religious scholars, who have maintained pressure upon and warned policy makers of its effects on the first language in KSA (Elyas, 2011). However, (Abuhamdia, 1988) claims that the Arabic language has distinctive faith-based roots among Arabs and the domination of English and French for scientific development has had no negative influence on the Arabic language.

Furthermore, some Arabs have the idea that teaching the English language will have a negative impact on the identity of Muslim students as they will modernise themselves by adopting Western culture and they will disregard their own cultural and religious values. With such a view in mind, the former English syllabus utilised in Saudi Arabia particularly focused on local cultures and deleted references to Western cultures, habits, or customs, such as dating and drinking alcohol, and replaced them with elements that were acceptable to the local cultures and tradition (Elyas, 2008). Muslim scholars believe that teaching English using a Western curriculum may contain references to cultures, habits, or customs that may not be acceptable in Muslim culture in general and Saudi culture in particular. It was feared that this would weaken Islamic values and, consequently, destroy Islamic youth (Islamia, 2003). In contrast, a number of scholars suggested that an Islamic approach and content should be followed and integrated into the teaching of English. In this way it was expected that they could preserve their youth from mislaying Islamic values, comprehending, adopting and getting influenced by Western culture and that they could also save their youth from adopting habits of Western people like dating, drinking alcohol and others that oppose Islam. Moreover, a number of English syllabus designers were called in to design such a curriculum that originates from a splendid Islamic Heritage (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014).

One of the other elements that has influenced the learning of English negatively is that students are not properly motivated towards it and motivation serves to be one of the key characteristics of success in acquiring any sort of knowledge and specifically, when it comes to getting to know a completely new language. In the late 20th century, Saudi students, due to a lack of motivation, possessed a negative attitude towards the learning of English. According to Zaid (1993), observations of the students showed that they did

not have adequate motivation and that this resulted in the failure of the English language in terms of teaching or learning. He further added that students did not concentrate on this foreign language, disregarding it continuously as they had several misapprehensions about the English language and its importance. They did not compare it with the importance of English in the practical world and therefore, they did not realize its eminence for communication and employment purposes. Their main perception was merely to pass the tests or the examination and to fulfil this aim, they just memorised certain words, passages and rules. However, most of the studies conducted in the early period of 21st century show that Saudis demonstrated a more optimistic attitude towards English language learning (Faruk, 2014). Moreover, some Saudi students believe that they are not able or willing to learn the English language and so perceive it as a dry and boring subject usually studied for the purpose of merely passing the examination. Also, English is considered a passive subject by a majority of Saudi students and therefore, they do not pay attention towards it in classrooms. They feel that English is just an academic exercise and they are only motivated enough for getting through the examination (Al-Seghayer, 2014).

On the other hand, there were many positive factors in the foundation of spreading English language education in Saudi Arabia. Such factors are highly influential in encouraging the teaching of English in Saudi Arabia such as the economy, the military, and the media. Economically, the consequences and impact of English language education was realized in Saudi Arabia due to its economic importance. Saudi Arabia is largely dependent on numerous foreign companies that play a crucial role in the economic development of the Kingdom. The fact cannot be ignored that in early 1978 around 90% of workers were foreigners who contributed their efforts in the construction of shopping malls, restaurants, and hotels whereas the remaining 10% were the Arab nationals who had a great command over the English language (Al-Braik, 2007). In addition, many companies and organisations such as the Saudi Telecommunication Company, the Saudi Aramco Oil Company and others used English as the medium of training and provided their employees with English training sessions. At that time one of the main purposes of education in EFL in Saudi Arabia was to produce students who should have adequate command over the language for communicating with foreign workers.

In the the 1990s, the Saudisation policies were introduced (a term used in Saudi Arabia to refer to the process of affirmative action for Saudis) making it relevant for Saudi natives to acquire communication competency skills in the English language in order to attain a position in the service industry and core industry (Looney, 2004). The Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco), founded in 1933, has a crucial role in building the economy of Saudi Arabia. This company gave immense significance to English language instruction in the country. Thus, Saudi workers started learning English through this company in order to have a job in the company. The distillation of petroleum products is largely linked to the English language and most of the development of the English language in the local workforce is due to oil. In this regard Karmani, (2005) has created a study of oil dynamics with the expansion of the English language in the Arabian Gulf region which is known as “Petro-linguistics”.

Furthermore, the English language is directly linked to the enhancement of the Saudi military forces with American military advisors and technicians who have been putting their collaborative efforts with Saudi Arabia since 1948 (Cordesman, 2003). However, there are numerous Saudis who have acquired English communication skills through the nature of their work, TV programmes, Radio stations and others but the Saudisation policies should take place as systematic English instruction is needed (Abir, 1988). Prior to this, legislation has put in an effective step of introducing English from 1958 for the purpose of dealing with realistic situations, therefore, this new subject was introduced to all Saudi government schools in 1959 (Al-Sadat & Al-Ghamdi, 2002). The educational sector was greatly expanded in Saudi Arabia after oil was discovered. The teachers, who usually gave instruction in the English language, were foreigners who had arrived from Arab countries like Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon (Zaid 1994).

Nowadays the utilization of the English language in Saudi Arabia has become widespread after the development phase during the last decade of the 20th century. Saudis are just required to get a command over written and spoken English language for spending their lives without difficulties. The English language is required at every instance, at every place like in hospitals, travelling, trading, and technology management (Elyas & Picard, 2010). Recently, the Saudi government has recognized the importance of English language for Saudi students and as a result is offering scholarships to motivate Saudis towards English language learning as an attempt to help Saudis improve their English. Furthermore, the government has been sending Saudi

students to diverse foreign countries like Australia, Britain, Canada and America for getting a post graduate degree in English. The aim of The Saudi Government is building the future of Saudi Arabia through providing scholarships to students not merely to study abroad and succeed but to return Saudi Arabia and assist in the development processes of Saudi society and acquire better employment opportunities and living standards (Ministry of Higher Education, 2015).

English is considered as a supplementary language in Saudi Arabia but the educational system of Saudi Arabia has played a crucial part in the development of English in the country. ur Rahman & Alhaisoni, (2013) stated that the function and utilisation of the English language is increasing day by day in Saudi Arabia in all sectors. The Saudi mass media, inclusive of both print and electronic media, is significant in the expansion of the English language as the country has enabled the circulation of diverse leading newspapers in the English language along with broadcasting and the incorporation of several English programmes in radio and TV. English language is utilised in the governmental websites despite the fact that Arabic is its official language. However, the present situation regarding the teaching of English in Saudi Arabia seems halted regardless of the efforts contributed by various bodies in this matter (ur Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013).

The English language has been enhanced to a great extent in the government schools and other higher educational institutions of Saudi Arabia so far. Recently, the Ministry of Education has ascertained certain basic aims and objectives for teaching English in the country. SELEP (Saudi English Language Education Policies) has laid down certain objectives for studying or teaching the English language (Faruk, 2014). These objectives are provided by the Ministry of Education, in the form of a recapitulated document stating that English language teaching should be developed for increasing the adeptness of students at all levels (elementary, secondary and intermediate) for six basic reasons (Alamri 2008: 1,11-12, 13-14; the Ministry of Education, 2004):

- i) To broaden the horizons of Islam and its faith;
- ii) To improve international communication;
- iii) To establish a socio-economic and cultural atmosphere in the country;
- iv) To communicate with English speakers with command rather than speaking Arabic at home;
- v) To establish a private career and future;

- vi) To hold the capability of acquiring and transmitting knowledge.

SELEP considers English as the international language of arts, commerce, science, communication and technology with necessary cultural, political, social, economic and religious beliefs and also regards it as the capital asset of an individual for acquiring higher education and future career growth. Similarly, English is also considered as a great instrument for spreading the faiths of Islam for the attainment of better traction in the globe and lastly for securing better employment and educational prospects.

2.5 The status of English language education in Saudi public schools

The educational system of Saudi Arabia has enabled Saudis to study English from grade 4 at the primary level continuously until the end of the secondary level. To elaborate, the syllabus for English in Saudi Arabia has certain conditions to facilitate the religious and cultural context of the society. The present status of English is one of the crucial factors for teaching English in Saudi Arabia. During the early history of education in Saudi Arabia, there was a general reluctance to teach English or any other foreign language. Only a few schools integrated this language in the curriculum where it was taught for several hours per week and merely offered at the secondary school level. Now the English language is an integral component of the educational syllabus of all primary schools since 2003 (Elyas & Picard, 2010).

During the early history of education in Saudi Arabia in the twentieth century, and after the establishment of the Ministry of Education in 1953, English education went through different variations of its development. When Saudi Arabia collaborated economically with the USA soon after the discovery of oil, the government recognized the significance of this development and English language education became one of the important keys that kept the country updated with global trends and met the requirements of the 20th century. Therefore, Saudi Arabia established the Scholarship Preparation School (SPS) in 1936 in Makkah to prepare and educate Saudis to travel abroad and obtain a Western education. This school is considered to mark the beginning of modern-day high school education in Saudi Arabia and the teaching of English in the Kingdom was first introduced in the SPS. The SPS was only open to Saudis going abroad, and not to other citizens (Al-Ghamdi & Al-Saddat, 2002). The main aim of this school was to prepare Saudi students to study abroad and English was an important foreign language in the school, as it was established in order to prepare students to

overcome obstacles in order to obtain knowledge in various subjects and assist in the development of Saudi Arabia. After that, Saudis started travelling to the USA and Britain for the purpose of obtaining education. SPS offered multiple courses and its syllabuses were adopted from the Egyptian educational system and impacted greatly by the educational practices of France; except for the syllabus of Islamic education which were regulated in accordance with the government of KSA. In terms of teaching, qualified teachers from the Middle East, especially Egypt, were invited and recruited to teach English in this school (Al-Ghamdi & Al-Saddat, 2002).

At the beginning of the Saudi Era, English and French languages were introduced to the KSA secondary education system as foreign languages. Consequently, the Ministry of Education (MoE) took a big decision and established a new system of study, known as the intermediate level education system in 1958 and it comprised three grades (grades 7–9). In the recently developed intermediate level education, French and English languages were considered to be given significance and taught but French was removed in 1969 by the Ministry of Education. Thus, French only remained in the curriculum at the secondary level (grades 10–12) (Al- Abdulkader 1978). Later the Ministry of Education (MoE) also removed the French language from the secondary school level too. Since then the English is taught as a core subject in public and private schools across the country.

During the period from 1970–2001, English was taught at the secondary and intermediate levels in the KSA from grade 7 to grade12. Thus, Saudi students studied English for six years until grade 12. They studied English four times per week for a class period of 45 minutes at every grade level. The teachers of English were non-native speakers, most of them national teachers who have graduated from local universities as well as some foreign teachers from other Arab countries such as Egypt and Sudan. The entire educational system of KSA is under the control of the Ministry of Education. As a centralised system, it enables English teachers to follow a similar curriculum with guidelines and deadlines that they are expected to follow (Al- Abdulkader 1978). In 2003, the government of Saudi Arabia introduced the English language in all primary schools due to the social and political pressures as this initiative was taken by the Director of the Curriculum Department at the Central Office (CDCO) of the MoE (Elyas 2008). Additionally, when the Ministry of Education introduced English language education in primary schools the same historic reasons for the Saudis' anti-

English language views occurred again on the surface and some of the obstacles that had faced the English language education in KSA previously resurfaced. However, currently the field of English education is growing rapidly in the country and the growth of English language education has also taken a new shape. English language education was introduced as a compulsory subject in grade 6 which is the last grade in the primary school. Thus, unlike the past, the status of English in the Kingdom is completely different now. Earlier little importance was given to teaching and learning of English in the Saudi education system.

Due to the influence of globalisation and modernisation policies, English is viewed as a distinctive subject by the policymakers, government, students, and teachers as they have identified the importance of the English language and incredible efforts are put into place at each educational level for communicating the expertise to students. English is now deemed as a significant core subject of the curriculum of the educational sector of KSA for which it has been made compulsory from the fourth grade in primary school to the university level. Moreover, the Ministry of Education is presently working to implement the English language from grade I in primary schools of Saudi Arabia. In earlier times, English learning commenced from grade 6, then the curriculum was amended and English learning started from grade 4 whereas the present conditions and future plans indicate that the English language will be introduced from grade I in order to attain better outcomes (ur Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013).

In addition, Saudi students have realized the importance of the English language to a greater extent. They have understood that English is no longer a language to pass in the examination but serves to be an important part of the higher education, commercial and business sectors, trade and international communication. In addition, the importance of English is identified more as a great prospect, source of esteem and is viewed more pragmatically. Due to this view, more students have enrolled in English language institutions. However, the outcomes of students are still not satisfactory (e.g Arabai, 2016; Al-Misnad, 1985; Alkubaidi, 2014; Almutairi, 2008; Arabai, 2014; Fareh, 2010; Rajab, 2013) in spite of the enhancements in the English language and being taught at more levels and for greater time periods in the public schools of Saudi Arabia. Similarly, the English students of secondary level are still incapable of communicating in this language even after studying English for seven years implying that their proficiency level is not up to the level anticipated (Al-Rasheed, 2008).

2.6 The status of English language education in Saudi Higher Education

The teaching of the English language in the higher education of Saudi Arabia, at the early stage, was quite slow and gradual. In 1949, the first college was established in the city of Makkah (KSA) in which English was taught for 2 hours/week in the four-year programme which was a modest start for teaching a foreign language. Then, in 1957 the first English department was established in King Saud University (Al-Haq, (1996). However, the majority of Saudi universities were established in the 1970s. The universities which were established in this period are King Fahd University (1975), King Abdul-Aziz University (1961), King Faisal University (1976), and Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud University (1974) and Umm Al-Qura University (1980). The majority of these universities has English departments. Additionally, some universities have English language centres for better learning of English education courses, and there are Arabic-English translation institutions (Al-Abed Al-Haq and Smadi 1996). Since that period of time learning and teaching the English language has gained a greater position in Saudi higher education.

Teaching the English language in Saudi universities was one of the priorities because it is the medium of instruction in many departments, schools, and faculties. English language courses are core courses taught once or twice a week in most of the Saudi universities for the students at the beginning of their study of all majors as a university course requirement. Currently, Saudi universities have introduced a Preparatory Year (PY) because they identified that the English attainment levels of the high school students were not up to the required level and therefore needed some improvement (Alenazi, 2014). At the Saudi Universities, the preparatory year serves to be the initial year for the students. It was established to improve and assist the students in developing their language and academic skills. In this particular year, intensive English language courses are compulsory courses for two academic semesters with an average of 20 hours/week. The core objective of this program is to develop and enhance the level of English of students in terms of basic language skills like listening, speaking, writing, and reading. It involves grammatical structures, pronunciation and vocabulary. Teaching syllabuses and strategies utilized in teaching and studying such skills, in the form of an integrated skills approach, are used for enhancing the aptness and precision of the language (Alshumaimeri, 2013). The teaching personnel recruited for PY programs have academic and professional qualifications and experience and these teachers utilise English as their native language or semi-native language. They are

assumed to hold Masters or PhD degrees, in addition to the certificates in the Cambridge-based English language teaching (CELTA and DELTA). Moreover, several Saudi universities have partnerships with famous organisations and universities who operate English language programs like Kaplan and Bell International with Pearson Longman and the Cambridge University Press, who have already developed and structured syllabuses and study content for the programs of PY (Alenazi, 2014).

Students have to pass the PY before they can embark on their full university studies. The success of this year with high grades especially in the English course, gives the students the opportunities to choose their own majors, because the medium instruction of most of the faculties is English such as medical schools, faculties of science, engineering and other departments within different faculties. Conversely, those students who attain quite lower grades in the PY and low grades in the English course cannot select their major subjects themselves and are persuaded to choose from majors in which the medium instruction is not English such as Arabic language studies, religious studies and most of the humanities (Alshumaimeri, 2013). In his study, he indicated that the Preparatory Year has a great effect in preparing students for their undergraduate studies. The results of his study show a significant increase in students' motivation in studying the English language across time. Their motivation for learning and acquiring English language skills at the beginning of the intensive English language program in the academic year were less than later on as their motivation increased significantly in the middle and towards the end of the program.

2.7 Summary

This chapter has focused on giving an overview of the status of English education in Saudi Arabia during the Saudi era to the present day with a general overview of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its educational system focused on the educational system in both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education. I presented and discussed the sociocultural and historical factors that contributed to developing English language education and also the obstacles that faced and negatively affected English education in Saudi Arabia. I described in more detail the different stages of the English education development that occurred in the Saudi public schools and Saudi higher education institutions. Presenting this chapter aimed to shed light on the English language education through the different stages to the present day in order to guide the reader to understand the Saudi context. The next chapter examines literature on

approaches to theories of writing, the nature of writing, definitions of academic writing in higher education, the nature of writing difficulty and finally writing issues facing EFL students globally.

3 CHAPTER THREE: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into nine sections. The first section briefly reviews schools of thought from the past to date, including the main theories of writing, which are Contrastive Rhetoric Theory, Cognitive Development Theory, Communication Theory and Social Constructionism as a theoretical background to writing English as second language. The presentation of theories in the first section will pave the way for a discussion in the next section of the development of the main approaches to teaching writing in ESL / EFL which evolved from the aforementioned theories. The second section reviews the well-known approaches to teaching writing, as presented in the relevant literature. The third section is about three commonly used writing approaches which are the product approach, process approach and genre approach. They will be briefly discussed in chronological order of their publication. The fourth section is about the English writing approaches used in Saudi Arabia and Taif University. The fifth section gives an overview of the nature of writing in general and English writing in particular. The sixth section is about definitions of academic writing of English as a foreign language. English and Arabic language differences and difficulties in writing as well as the importance of academic writing in HE are presented in the seventh section. The eighth section is about English writing textbooks used in Saudi Arabia and in the context of Taif University. Finally, the most common issues encountered by EFL students in cross-cultural academic writing are reviewed.

3.2 Theoretical background of English ESL/ EFL writing

In this section, an overview of the schools of thought of English language writing from which ESL writing approaches evolved will be briefly addressed. ESL writing approaches will be discussed in greater depth in the following section. In the history of ESL writing, different schools of thought have influenced ESL writing such as 1) Behaviourists (e.g. representing Contrastive Rhetoric Theory), 2) Expressionists & Cognitivists (e.g. representing Cognitive Development Theory), 3) Communication Theory and 4) Social Constructionists (e.g. representing Social Constructionism Theory (Silva, 1990)). ESL writing approaches evolved from English L1 writing composition theories. Various researchers and scholars of L2 writing developed their own orientations based on the adopted school of thought which evolved from L1 writing composition theories. Thus, many researchers on English writing as a second language

realised that L2 non-native students' needs differed from the needs of the native speakers (Johns, 1990). Thus, four influential approaches in ESL writing instruction evolved sequentially from the aforementioned theories in four different stages. Each stage has its own scholars and model. Therefore, the three main writing theories (Contrastive Rhetoric Theory, Cognitive Development Theory and Social Constructionism Theory) as well as their connection with the ESL writing approaches that evolved from them will be elucidated.

In the first stage, the controlled approach was dominant during the 1950s and 1960s. This approach was influenced by structural linguistics and behaviourist psychology. The main focus of the behaviourist school of thought in terms of teaching method during the 1950s was oral rather than written proficiency; writing was considered to be an exercise in habit formation in which students were trained to copy and imitate written forms as writing practice. Writing was commonly viewed in the controlled approach as a support skill, used to reinforce the acquisition of grammar (Hinkel, 2002).

The major approach in the second stage of ESL writing instruction was the current-traditional rhetoric approach, influenced by Kaplan's theory of contrastive rhetoric. It regarded learning to write as the identification and internalisation of organisational patterns. In these two stages, teaching writing shifted from the initial grammar-translation method to the audio-lingual method (ALM), particularly in the late 1950s and early 1960s. A new EFL teaching approach which is known as the product approach evolved from the aforementioned approaches as a result of the combined of these two stages approaches. Practice, punctuation and grammatical structure were the most strongly emphasised aspects of the audio-lingual method (Leki, 1992; Matsuda, 2001; Silva, 1990).

In the third stage of teaching ESL writing teaching, the process theory became the dominant approach having evolved from cognitive development theory. Faigley (1986) identified that the process approach was influenced by cognitivism (e.g. Flower & Hayes, 1981) and expressionism (e.g. Moffet, 1968). Moffet (1968) stated that the expressionist model emphasised the writer, the audience and different types of texts and was influential mainly in American elementary and secondary schools. It focused on the final products of the written text and showed the connection between syntax, semantics and pragmatics (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Subsequently, the communication theory

emerged and influenced all ESL approaches. It emphasised the political and the social purposes of discourse characteristics, particularly discourse-in use, and holds that interpersonal communication is the basis of individualism and independent communication; it involves various discourse levels such as social, institutional, economic, cultural and material (Kennedy, 1998). To connect communication theories with composition studies, a strong focus is maintained on the discourse. With respect to communication theories, various discourses are considered for various purposes of communication. Cooper and Odell (1977) identified a number of forms and various styles of writing. Among these are poetry, fiction, technical writing and business writing. According to Cohen (1998), communicative strategies are the means through which writers are able to express themselves efficiently.

In the fourth stage, the genre approach, which emerged from the social constructionism theory, became popular. The social constructionism theory was widely applied to composition and writing (Cazden, 1996). Writers use social/affective strategies to communicate with their discourse community in order to support their ideas and emotions, as well as the motivation for their writing (Carson and Longhini, 2002). According to social constructionism, writers should take into consideration the norms of the writing task according to the requirements of different genres of writing in different contexts and for different purposes. The social constructionist concept is that writing has a social purpose and that the product of writing is social, potentially involving a certain audience in a certain context (Coe, 1987). Moreover, the main focus of this theory lies in the influence a community has on writers and their writing, and how different types of writing can reflect a certain community. It also emphasises how the discourses of a community are applied and reconstituted in writing and the professional formations in which the writers take part (Kennedy, 1998).

3.3 Approaches to teaching ESL/EFL writing

In the previous section, writing theories and their connection with the early stages of the development of the ESL writing approaches were briefly addressed. Thus, the way is paved to discuss and address ESL writing approaches in greater detail in this section. Therefore, this section will examine the three most commonly used ESL/EFL writing approaches, placing more emphasis on the approach most relevant to this study and most commonly used in the context and in the textbooks in Taif University in Saudi Arabia, i.e., the process approach.

As mentioned above, ESL writing approaches evolved from English L1 writing composition theories. Therefore, different researchers and scholars of L2 writing developed their own orientations based on the adopted schools of thought as an expansion and development of L1 theories. Thus, many researchers on English writing as a second language realised that L2 non-native students' needs differed from the needs of the native speaker (Johns, 1990). There are four main L2 writing approaches influenced by the aforementioned writing theories in the field of the ESL writing. These four approaches are the controlled approach, the current-traditional rhetoric approach, which together created what is known as the product approach, the process approach and the social, genre approach (Silva, 1990). These three approaches (product, process and genre) were the most commonly used approaches during this period. Many reviews of the history of teaching writing skills reveal that, among the various approaches that have been used to teach writing effectively, these three approaches have been the most influential. Much research has strongly suggested that all these approaches carry their own weaknesses and strengths but are also complementary to each other (e.g., Grami, 2010; Hyland, 2007; Paltridge, 2004; Badger & White, 2000; McDonough & Shaw, 2003). Hyland, (2002) claimed that it is essential to classify them into three approaches owing to the critical significance of the audience and the social context. Moreover Yi, (2009) stated that teaching writing approaches themselves are classified differently by different researchers, but can be distilled into three main approaches: product/text-oriented, process/cognitive-oriented and reader/genre oriented. Furthermore, Barkaoui (2007) stated that the three orientations, i.e. text-focused, process-focused, and socio-cultural, should be well manifested by the teachers according to their teaching approaches. Therefore, these three approaches (product, process and genre) will be addressed in more detail and critiqued.

3.3.1 Product approach

The product approach was considered by many researchers to be the most widely used and traditional of L2 writing approaches (Yan, 2005; Nunan, 1999; Richards, 1990). The product-based writing approach was strongly influenced by behaviourists and was based on the previous teaching methods and approaches such as the grammar translation method, the audio-lingual method, and the controlled approach to the current-traditional rhetoric approach. This product approach towards writing remained common in teaching writing in ELT from the 1950s to the 1980s (Leki, 1992; Matsuda, 2001; Silva,

1990; Ferris and Hedgcock, 2004; Raimes, 1983). In the product approach, writing has commonly been viewed as a support skill, used to reinforce the acquisition of grammar, and learning to write as the identification and internalisation of organisational patterns (Hinkel, 2002).

The main focus of the product approach was on the final product of the students' writing. Richards, (1990) stated that the product approach is concerned with the final written text and that is why it was called the product approach. The main aim of the product approach was to provide students with a model text and ask them to imitate it, copying and transforming the models given in textbooks, with teachers considering learning writing as habit formation (Nunan, 1999; Raimes, 1983; Silva, 1990; Tribble, 1996). It focused mainly on learning grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling (McDonough & Shaw, 2003; Badger & White, 2000). However, some criticism has been directed towards the product-based writing approach. Escholz, (1980) stated that this approach was a tedious and uninteresting exercise for students and did not motivate them. It compared the students writing text to the better models designed by professionals in the field of L2 writing and restricted the writers' freedom rather than empowering them or liberating them. Silva (1990) asserted that the product-based writing approach was an exercise which prompts children merely to keep on copying without using their own senses and mental abilities. Barkaoui (2007) stated that text-oriented research sees L2 writing development only in terms of the features of the texts that L2 learners produce. Moreover, it has been argued that this approach only focuses on the sentence-level writing skills of students, as well as within the context of readers' reading abilities (Hyland, 2002). Furthermore, the product approach did not take into consideration the role of other process skills such as planning of the text which enhances the final production of the text (Badger & White, 2000). It was argued that using the product approach in teaching discouraged students from practising writing because it did not teach them how writing works in real situations and did not give them the opportunity to practise writing step-by-step until they arrived at a complete text as a final step or process (Hairston, 1982). Hairston (1982) also asserted that the best way of teaching writing skills required involving students in a real situation (i.e., an authentic situation where there was a real need for writing texts) to enable them to produce correct writing and that in order to do this, the students required more than the simple provision of a set of rules.

In this present study in the Saudi context, using a product approach, to learning academic writing skills such as paraphrasing, summarising, reporting, quoting and different types of essay writing were not appropriate as learning these skills requires brainstorming, planning, and editing and correction by the students themselves, their peers and their teachers, elements which are not part of the product approach, as this is concerned only with final product of the written text. In addition, this approach is not suitable for the context of the study (Taif University in Saudi Arabia) because the teaching of academic writing skills and the textbooks used at Taif University are based on the process approach to teaching writing. Finally, Yan (2005) held that the product approach neglected the main procedures that students and writers needed in order to produce an effective piece of writing.

3.3.2 Process approach

The process approach evolved from cognitive development theory. One of the most significant contributions made by this theory to research is its research direction, which leads to writing theory as a process; it defines the close observations that writers make during the process of choosing and deciding which text to pursue next (Kennedy, 1998). The recognition of the newly developing field of NES (Native English Speakers) by researchers and the realisation of the distinct needs of English L2 students in the academic environment by teachers are the two key factors facilitating this transformation (Reid, 2001).

Research focused on NES (Native English Speakers) was conducted in the 1980s before ESL was accessible and well-established. Reid (2001) considered the NES to be the “the expressive approach” and the most credible one. He believed that the NES served as the foundation for ESL, where writing was considered to be a process of self-discovery and writers were encouraged to express their feelings. The focus of ESL writing changed to the process approach from the language product-based approach during the 1980s. The process approach appeared as a challenge to the product approach, shifting the emphasis from the final product to processes of writing that enabled writers to produce written texts by going through stages of preliminary writing (brainstorming and outlining), drafting the product (revising and reformulating) and post-writing (editing and proofreading) before the product was finalised (Kroll, 1990).

From a historical perspective, this approach was influenced by two different L1 composition schools of thought identified by Faigley (1986), cognitivism (e.g., Flower & Hayes, 1981) and expressionism (e.g., Moffet, 1968). In the 1970s, the expressionist view gained popularity. It emphasised an individual's distinct expression with respect to writing studies and teaching (Johns, 1990). According to Berlin (1988), writing was seen as an art and a process of creativity in that period, and was associated with self-discovery and self-expression. Moffet (1968) stated that the expressionist model emphasised the writer, the audience and different types of texts and was influential mainly in American elementary and secondary schools. Flower and Hayes (1981) put forward a cognitive analysis that took intellectual analytical procedures into account with respect to writing. They placed considerable significance on problem-solving and thinking skills. With respect to the cognitivist framework, there were two major concepts: the thinking concept and the processing concept. The process approach shared characteristics with the expressionist model. It focused on the final products of the written text and showed the connection between syntax, semantics and pragmatics (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Thus, the cognitivist model overlapped with the expressionist model by focusing on the process and product of writing.

The process approach can be traced back to the late 1970s, specifically to Zamel (1976) who first introduced the process theory into L2 writing studies. Zamel (1976) was influenced by cognitive psychologists and followed their work, proposing a cognitive model of the composition processes. The cognitive model presented by Flower and Hayes (1981) identified three important processes of writing: planning as the first process, then translating, and finally, reviewing. These processes included other embedded processes. This model was seen as a means of understanding the thinking process followed by writers involved in the process of composition. According to Liu and Hansen (2002) and Zamel (1983), the focus of this approach was on the process of composition and it viewed writing as a non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discovered and reformulated their ideas as they attempted to approximate meaning. In this way, it differed from the product-oriented approach that viewed writing as an activity, focusing only on the final product. This approach emphasised activities for practising linguistic skills, such as pre-writing, brainstorming, drafting, and editing, while placing less emphasis on grammatical aspects of the linguistic knowledge (Badger & White, 2003; Tribble, 1996; White & Arndt, 1991; Hedge, 1988; Raimes, 1985; Zamel, 1983).

ESL scholars and researchers have given many definitions and descriptions of the process approach to clarify the practical activities involved in it. Nunan (2001) stated that the process approach focused on the steps of writing involving drafting and redrafting a piece of work. Similarly, Renandya (2002) stated that the process of writing consisted of planning, drafting, revising and editing. At the planning stage, the students were encouraged to write. The drafting stage focused on the fluency of writing and was not preoccupied with grammatical accuracy or the neatness of the draft. Next, at the revising stage, the students re-wrote their text on the basis of feedback given during the responding stage. At the editing stage, the students engaged in tidying up their texts as they prepared the final draft for evaluation by their teachers. Further, Vanessa (1992) defined the process approach as focusing more on varied classroom activities which promoted the development of language use, such as brainstorming, group discussion, and re-writing. Nunan, (2001) also compared the process approach with the product-oriented approach, which has been conventionally adopted. He highlighted the salient features of this approach. The writing tasks produced by the traditional product approach were mere imitations, or copies of the model supplied by the teachers, with a focus only on the steps followed during the creation of the piece of work. The aim of this approach was to achieve an error-free coherent text. In contrast, in the process approach, the impossibility of producing an error-free text was acknowledged. However, if the writer reflected, discussed and worked on successive drafts of texts together with the creative process, he or she would become somewhat closer to achieving perfection. Moreover, Brown, (2001) concluded that the product-oriented approach concentrates on a certain model of composition in which students produced texts and the quality of this text was judged against a list of criteria such as content, organisation, use of vocabulary, use of grammar, and mechanical considerations such as spelling and punctuation. In the process approach, on the other hand, students were allowed to manage their own writing by being given the opportunity to think while writing. The process approach has made a huge impact on writing pedagogy, and since 1980, syllabi and textbooks in many parts of the world have incorporated this approach as an integral part of teaching, evidence for its popularity and preference over other writing approaches (Ivanič, 2004; Gee, 1997; Uzawa, 1996; White & Arndt, 1991; Flower & Hays, 1981).

However, as with the product approach, many researchers criticised the process approach. For instance, Badger and White (2000) believed that it did not teach ESL

students sufficient grammatical knowledge which would make them better able to write adequately. In addition, Ivanič, (2004) argued that with the process approach, it was not easy to assess the students' writing, because the assessment usually occurred in the final product. Moreover, Horowitz (1986) believed that using process writing did not prepare students for exam conditions. Additionally, Flower (1994) pointed out a limitation of this theory, which was that it did not take the writing context into account, as it appeared to be completely cognitive and ignored the social elements and factors present in writing. Moreover, this theory was not clear as to when and where a writer was to develop the knowledge transformation process in his/her writing. The practical and the theoretical problems have been considered by critics and some have suggested that there should be less focus on the writer in ESL composition and more on the reader. Some critics have disputed the contention that the process approach helped students to prepare for their academic studies and examinations and fulfilled requirements of the L1 and L2 to have texts for professional and academic readers (Coe, 1987; Horowitz, 1986). Regarding this critique, Horowitz (1986) and Johns (2003) stated that this shift of the focus to content still involved the use of process-oriented procedures such as revision, peer review, prewriting and collaboration. Despite this, the role the process approach played in ESL writing was very significant and many current researches on writing in a L2 were based on the process approach (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

3.3.3 Genre Approach to Teaching Writing

The idea of genre approaches to teaching writing first began in Australia in the late 1980s. It is now the main approach used in English teaching in Australia, New Zealand and some other surrounding countries. This approach is functionalistic and differs from the naturalistic methods of learning language (Hyland (2002). Knapp & Watkins, (2005) stated that the functional model of language was the basis of the genre approach to teaching writing. Its theoretical perspective concentrated on the social contractedness of language which considered text as a social process. Writing development was seen from the sociocultural research perspective as incorporating the genres, values, and practices of the target community. Grabe & Kaplan (1996) defined the genre approach as a communicative event based on purpose, structure, style, content and the intended audience of the target language. Hyland (2004) contended that using the genre approach meant not only writing, but writing something to achieve a specific purpose. Hyland (2004) explained that the concept of the genre approach gave teachers of English a broader understanding, looking beyond the writing content, writing process and the

form of the text, as it considered writing as a method of communications between the writer and the readers leading to a better understanding of the language used to accomplish coherent, purposeful prose. Knapp and Watkins (2005) supported this view, stating that the aim of the genre approach was to enable the students to use different genre processes of writing effectively by giving them the ability to use different genres processes such as describing and arguing. Without using these, genre writing could be a frustrating and unproductive process.

The genre approach was considered to be the most modern approach to teaching writing as it took in to consideration the culture and the audience, linking them to structure of the text (Hyland, 2004). In addition, the genre approach enriched EFL learners with knowledge of the typical patterns and possibilities of variation which enabled them to use powerful genres of mainstream culture, distinguishing the reasons why they made certain linguistic and rhetorical choices and how to use these genres effectively (Hyland, 2005).

However, the genre-based writing approach has not been without criticism. It has often been accused of being similar to the 'supply and demand' model of economics where the final product was supplied according to the wishes and desires of the masses. This was in spite of the fact that Fulcher (1996) likened writing to a simple repetition of 'process and product'. In spite of the opposition, the idea has grown in popularity since its inception in the 1980s and is now preferred by many teachers and researchers. Genre based writing was effective in teaching writing according to the needs of those who were going to read the text and involved the art of convincing, resolving and reconciliation through writing (Candlin, 1999; Hyland, 2002; Cumming, 2002). However, Badger and White (2000) believed that it may lead teachers to ignore the role of the students in the learning process, considering them largely as passive learners, and to undervalue the skills needed to produce a text. Kay and Dudley-Evans (1998) also criticised this approach, arguing that it was a restricted approach which prevented the teachers from becoming imaginative teachers and consequently led to a lack of creativity and demotivation in the learners. Thus, if this approach was used excessively or incorrectly, it could have become boring and stereotyped (Kay and Dudley-Evans (1998). Hyland and Hyland (2006) stated that in both the process approach and the genre approach, participation in the target communities could be built on the learner's confidence and literacy resources by their teachers. However, it has been pointed out that much teaching of EFL writing has been dominated by the product and process

approaches, while it is only since the 1990s that the genre approach has gained prominence (Badger and White, 2000; Tribble, 1996). An important point that should be taken into consideration is that each of these approaches has its own strengths and weaknesses; however, when used together according to the students' needs, they can complement each other (Badger & White, 2003; McDonough & Shaw, 2003; White & Arndt, 1991).

Finally, it can be said that many studies conducted regarding EFL teaching writing approaches have offered valuable insights revealing the fact that all approaches have their own strengths and weaknesses and following any one of these approaches exclusively is not advisable. Therefore, teachers should be using the available knowledge of all teaching ESL writing approaches to synthesize appropriate approaches and varied techniques according to the students' need, social context and their academic system to teach writing (Badger & White, 2000; Asiri, 1997; Raimes, 1991).

3.4 Teaching English Writing Approaches in the Saudi context and at Taif University

Teaching the English language in Saudi universities is one of the priorities because it is the medium of instruction in many departments, schools, and faculties. English language courses are core courses taught once or twice a week in most of the Saudi universities for the students at the beginning of their study of all majors as a university course requirement. Currently, Saudi universities have introduced a Preparatory Year (PY) because they have identified among high school students that the level of English was not up to the required level and therefore needed some improvement (Alenazi, 2014). At the Saudi universities, the preparatory year serves to be the initial year for the students. It was established to improve and assist the students in developing their language and academic skills. In this particular year, intensive English language courses are compulsory courses for two academic semesters with an average of 20 hours/week. The core objective of this program is to develop and enhance students' level of English in terms of basic language skills like listening, speaking, writing, and reading. It also involves grammatical structures, pronunciation and vocabulary (Alshumaimeri, 2013).

The approaches for teaching English in general and writing in particular are varied according to the content of the textbooks. Textbooks are developed, based on up to date teaching approaches in native English speaking countries. In spite of updated textbooks adopting new approaches proposed for the Saudi context however, one traditional

approach (grammar translation method) is still utilised and favoured for use in teaching the English language in the Saudi context rather than other approaches (Griffiths and Parr, 2001). Teachers in Saudi Arabia prefer to use traditional methods, i.e. the traditional, teacher-centred approach (grammar translation method) to be in control of the learning process rather than the textbooks. Al Asmari (2013) mentioned that traditional approaches make learners depend on the teachers teaching rather than learning. Following traditional approaches in teaching and learning makes students simply imitate their teachers losing the sense of creativity. Thus, they do not depend on themselves applying learning process such as planning, drafting and reviewing in writing. EFL Saudi learners have criticised the traditional approaches such as '*teacher-dominant interaction*' used in teaching the English language in Saudi Arabia and find it boring and preventing interactions in class (Broughton et al, 1994). The use of traditional teacher-centred, book-centred, grammar-translation methods in teaching English in many parts of the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia is very common and focus is strongly on rote learning (Bacha, 2010). Similarly, Zafer (2002) reported that in a study in the Qassim region of Saudi Arabia about the teaching methods teachers used, the methods most favoured by English instructors were the audio-lingual method, followed by the grammar-translation method. As indicated by Fareh (2010), English instructors talked through most of the lesson, explaining what the lesson is about and how to address it and students rarely spoke or asked questions, even if they did not understand. Similarly, Alkubaidi (2014) noted that classes are normally quiet, since the students take a passive role in the learning process. In addition, ur Rahman, & Alhaisoni, (2012) pointed out that in comparison with many countries where English is taught as a second or foreign language, Saudi Arabian English teachers used a teaching methodology which was not particularly appropriate, and specifically for learning academic writing. He claims that to support good academic writing composing methodologies that are not employed in the Saudi curriculum. As a consequence students just depend on the teacher as the source of knowledge, thinking that knowledge is just obtained from the teachers not by themselves. As a result, students do not make any effort to pursue and discover the knowledge they need for themselves and so never participate. They just simply listen to the teachers and apply whatever they said. According to Al Harbi, (2018), the importance of learning and teaching the English language in Saudi Arabia has increased. However, English language teaching approaches remain teacher-centred and traditional and are still preferred by many teachers even while many up to date approaches and textbooks are suggested to them.

There are many up to date teaching and learning approaches specifically in academic writing to make the learning process more effective and much easier than traditional approaches. Teaching students a wide range of writing methods and techniques encourages them to follow these strategies which enable them to write more and interact. However, even higher-level EFL students are considered to be reluctant writers if they have not been taught the necessary skills and strategies to know how to write and hence tend to remain unaware of them. It is recommended that up to date approaches to English language teaching to introduced and applied in order to improve English language teaching in Saudi Arabia (Al Harbi, 2018).

The process approach is the theoretical approach utilised in the Taif University context and in many universities in Saudi Arabia. The textbook for academic writing (Writing Academic English by Alice Oshima & Ann Hogue, Fourth Edition) that is used to teach EFL Saudi students in the Department of English Language at Taif University is based on the process approach. It views EFL writing as process and its instructions closely follow and apply the features of the process approach in its exercises; indeed, all the tasks involved in English academic writing skills in this textbook are in fact applications of the process approach. For example, the textbook has appendices explaining the writing process and giving rules for editing symbols, self-editing and peer-editing. It also addresses group brainstorming in class when writing the first draft. Self-editing and peer-editing are used in most chapters of the textbook, with students being asked to read each other's' drafts to a small group of classmates. All these activities are features and applications of the process approach. Finally, part of the Department's policy is that teachers have to follow the teaching approach of the textbook and accomplish the objectives set out in it. Unfortunately, several of these features and applications are absent from other approaches (e.g. pre-writing, brainstorming, self-editing, reporting, note taking, paraphrasing, using quotations and editing by peers and teachers).

3.5 The nature of writing

Understanding the notion of writing is crucial in the development of this study. However, 'writing' has been defined in multiple ways. For example, it has been defined as a simple sign language used as the ultimate medium of preserving language. Richards and Platt (1992) explained the term as a system of written symbols which represent the sounds, syllables, or words of a language. However, a number of linguists have not accepted this simplistic point of view and termed it instead as an extremely

complex activity that needs a combination of perception and knowledge to generate a piece of writing (Nunan, 1989). Moreover, Shokrpour and Fallahzadeh (2007) define writing as the reflection of the writer's ability with communicative skills through applying a complex activity and a social act which is not easy to learn and difficult to develop, especially in an EFL context. Along the same lines, Rivers (1981) described writing as the adoption of a comprehensible means in the target language for communicating and conveying facts regarding authentic concepts in a reasonable order. In addition, he explained that, as writing includes the significant arrangement of words for communication, such as the use of words, sentence and language rules and in what manner, the aforementioned parts should be transferred into a written arrangement, which involves a complex activity.

The notion of cognitive abilities refers to a thinking-reasoning process, which is also another way of defining writing (Prior, 1998; Raimes, 1983; Troyka, 1990; White & Arndt, 1991). Woolever (1991) agreed with this definition and added that ideas or thoughts need to be properly organized in order to communicate and achieve a purpose. Moreover, Andrew (2001) perceived writing as a complex activity dependent upon a significant number of elements that help complete the process of writing; for example, imagination, feelings, state of mind, mood, cognitive state, skills with the medium, and setting. Similarly, Elbow (1998) stated that there are two processes of writing: the first is thinking about the meaning and the second is reflecting the meaning into language, because writing represents what we think. Thus, the writing process reflects ideas which stay in the mind. Therefore, students who are hesitant about writing ideas down often suffer difficulties with this activity and encounter problems when they start looking for reasons to write and producing written sentences. In addition, Brown (2001) claimed that writing involves a systematic series of actions related to thinking, comprising different levels that include designing, composing and editing before concluding. Moreover, Urquhart and McIver (2005) stated that composing is a tedious recursive process, which makes people go through a composition many times, repeating certain phases over and over again. Students need to learn writing strategies from their teachers that will enable them to produce a composition that follows a specific direction of ideas.

3.6 Definition of academic writing in higher education

The difficulties of academic writing increase in higher education contexts and students need to be more skilful in academic writing because of the high quality of what is required in such contexts. The level of difficulty increases when students are required to produce high-quality output, as is the case in academic settings (Hopkins, 1989; McDonough & Shaw, 2003; Widdowson, 1983). Academic writing is a challenging task in higher education. Writing itself is complex in nature and becomes an even more difficult task when the composing has to be done in a foreign language, as the task demands the systematic syntactical and grammatical usage of terms (Criollo, 2003). The basic components of academic writing skills can be defined. However, it is harder to define precisely what academic writing is. Identifying the methods and strategies that can be applied to the teaching of academic writing can also be a difficult task, as every academic discipline endeavours to implement its own academic writing courses and teaching approaches based on the new needs and varieties of academic written work skills and ELT over time. In academic contexts there are a variety of academic writing styles required for different kinds of academic purposes. In the same respect, Rectenwald and Carl (2011) defined academic writing as the sort of composing that students are required to do at university level and state that the genres of academic writing differ significantly from one academic discipline to another, and methods which are acknowledged as suitable in one might not be termed as leading to “good” academic writing in another. For example, reports and summaries concerning scientific disciplines in comparison with argumentative writing are generally utilized within the social science disciplines, while paraphrasing is considered appropriate for all academic disciplines. Additionally, Cooper and Odell (1977) have identified many styles of written discourse, such as dramatic writing, personal writing, reporting, research, academic writing, fiction, poetry, business writing, and technical writing. Moreover, Al Fadda (2012) stated that academic writing should be able to attract active learning sessions that engage EFL students in an intellectual community to follow and apply basic rules to evaluate and synthesize the words, ideas, and opinions of others in order to develop their own academic voice. Furthermore, academic writing instruction in academic contexts most appropriately focuses on identifying, practising, and reproducing specific features of written texts for particular audiences. In terms of classroom practice, teachers need to acquaint students with the textual features of relevant disciplines, so that they can learn to analyse their purposes, assess audience expectations and produce texts which are acceptable in a certain discourse community

(Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). Similarly, students entering academic disciplines should learn the genres and conventions of each particular disciplinary community (Freeman, Carey, & Miller, 1991).

Regarding the content of academic writing, Brosig, 2008 claimed that academic writing is not only what the topic is about; the content of academic writing is crucial and should include the following main components in both academic courses and the texts the students are going to produce. The first component is a detailed explanation of academic writing content, the meaning of academic honesty and the consequences of dishonesty. Thus, as part of an academic writing course, L2 students should learn how to use direct and indirect quotations and the technical style of quotations according to different reference systems. Despite using references in research and not in essay-writing examinations, L2 learners should differentiate between their own and other writers' opinions. Moreover, the content of any academic writing course should include the information that academic students should have acquired before they graduate from a higher education institution (Brosig & Kas, 2008).

The second component is that students should be able to understand the types of resources to use in their writing and the means of acquiring them, such as using the library and the Internet, and introducing them to online journals, e-books and databases in order to obtain information and knowledge about the topic on which they are going to write. The third component is referencing, which is one of the main principles of academic honesty and involves the proper citing of sources. The fourth component is that students should be able to understand working in accordance with guidelines and limitations, such as word limits and deadlines, and learn how important it is that these factors should be respected and met. The same notion is stated by Murray and Moore (2006), arguing that effective academic writing is a continuous process involving reflection, improvement, development, progress, and the fulfilment of various types of writing in varying measures. Moreover, Spack (2001) illustrated that, as writing is such an important skill, English language teachers should concentrate on engaging students in developing the ability to write from other sources, which is one of the main parts of their academic writing experience. Moreover, Bizzell (1986) stated that students can be socially intellectual not only by interacting with people, but also by encountering the writings of others. Furthermore, Spack (1988) claimed that students looking forward to becoming better writers need to become better readers. Thus, reading techniques are a part of L1 and L2 composition instruction. Therefore, summarizing, quoting and

paraphrasing are skills students should master, not only for linguistic purposes, but also for analysing an author's style and logical reasoning.

Therefore, it is crucial for English writing teachers and policy makers in HE, who are interested in the teaching and learning of academic writing and are responsible for students' writing development, to be aware of and up to date with the current institutional practices and research to provide a critique of student writing and writing pedagogy in HE to develop EAP writing in their own contexts (Lillis, 2002). Lillis also illustrated that in order to develop academic writing in a target context, teachers and policy makers should ensure students' knowledge of different ways of writing according to different readers. They should be aware of students' needs and what to exclude, rather than include, in terms of the academic writing content of courses, as well as the proper approaches to teaching writing according to their social context. Thus, teachers and policy makers should teach students the new technological tools they need to obtain information from different resources and the ability to use them to fulfil the requirements of academic writing as part of academic courses in HE.

3.7 The nature of the difficulties and complexity of writing for EFL students

In many parts of the world, university students desire to have an excellent grasp of English language writing. However, in countries where English is used and treated as a foreign language, academic writing is considered challenging for EFL students (Mutwarasibo, 2013). Many researchers describe writing as a very difficult task, as the cognitive skills required demand maximum concentration and a peaceful environment, as well as careful thinking for the uninterrupted flow of thoughts. It is highly complex work, as writing pushes the brain to produce information that might only come to mind at a particular moment (Smith, 1989; White, 1987; Widdowson, 1983). It is not an easy task for many of us to write our thoughts down on paper (Widdowson, 1983). In addition, academic writing demands that students be familiar with complicated linguistic terms and rhetorical styles that are not part of their everyday socializing activities (Harklau, 2003; Kruse, 2003). Moreover, academic writing is responsible for both generating content and looking for different ways to express thoughts. Thus, it tests students' skills with language and the generation of creative ideas (Hyland, 2003; Jones, 1999; Liu & Braine, 2005; Torrance, 1999). Students' cognitive resources can be overstretched as a result (Jones, 1999). In this way, the academic writing process also brings more complexity to the subject and a whole new level of difficulty for L2

students (Barber, 2002; Evans & Green, 2007; Fukao & Fujii, 2001; Krause, 2001; Mahfoudhi, 2003; Ryu, 2003; Torrance, 1999; Yasuda, 2005).

A variety of factors have been addressed as accounting for the complexities present in learning English. For example, writing requires the inclusion of a number of skills, such as producing ideas, collecting information, paraphrasing and summarizing facts, shaping ideas in a systematic order, editing, and proofreading (Fukao & Fujii, 2001). Students can find it exhausting and difficult to fulfil all the aforementioned requirements (Campbell, 1990). Therefore, to make writing relatively easy for L2 students to learn and practise academic writing techniques at university, teaching English writing is an essential part of academic work in many tertiary institutions. Hence, academic writing should hold the highest priority in English, as it is declared the most difficult among the skills to be mastered during the process of learning a language. (Fukao & Fujii, 2001; Lillis, 2001).

Academic writing can be particularly difficult for writers who write in their native language, thus it becomes more complicated and the difficulties increase when the writer has to deal with a foreign language. Therefore, a distinction emerges between students who have English as their mother tongue, and students who practise English as their second language. Along the same lines, Campbell (1990) pinpointed that the writing skill is considered a difficult cognitive ability to which most foreign language learners have to adapt. Moreover, Schoonen (2003) affirmed that the process of composing in a foreign language is even more of a critical process, even more complicated than writing in the native tongue. The writer faces the challenge of maintaining grammar in a manner different from his or her own mother tongue.

However, Silva (1993) disregarded the above-mentioned differences by observing that students with English as their second language are provided with a strategically, rhetorically, and linguistically important difference in comparison to their first language (L1). In response to this, Kumaravadivelu (2003) raised the argument that adopting excellent teaching approaches is dependent upon our current English as a second language (ESL)/EFL writing knowledge through which our students' needs are met. Hence, as an outcome of academic practice, complications and difficulties, much research work has been carried out to identify and eliminate problems with writing and to give the best efforts to finding solutions to these complications or at least to reduce

the degree of difficulties for native and non-native learners of English writing skills (Al Fadda, 2012).

3.8 English and Arabic language differences and difficulties in writing

Language differences are considered difficulties for EFL students and have a crucial impact on the academic writing of students. Differences in the linguistic and rhetorical styles of the second or target language affect writing because students have to shift from the linguistic and rhetorical style of one language to a different one, and one with which they are not accustomed. Even if their grammar and vocabulary are correct, this process is not an easy task and requires great effort from EFL/ESL students (Siti Hamin & Mohammad, 2012). In this respect, Yiu (2009) suggested that students whose native language has more diverse and complicated structures than the English language, might have a tendency to experience difficulties when attempting to pursue their academic studies in English. This implies that international students encounter a number of difficulties understanding topics and writing in English and applying its rules and structures while they are studying in English-medium universities. Similarly, Gomaa-Moulds (2010) agreed that the first language influences the target language, making academic writing in the English language the most difficult skill for English learners.

In relation to the context of the present study, the mother tongue is Arabic and the target language utilized in academic writing is English. English and Arabic are two very different languages, with different alphabets, sounds, vowel patterns, pronunciation, capitalization styles, articles and so forth. Arabic is of the Semitic language family and, when compared with the English language, the grammatical rules and structure of Arabic are not only very different, but more difficult than those in English (Sayidina, 2010). Language differences and language interference are considered important issues that face Arab students while they are learning English. Arab students and native speakers of English have diverse writing styles, abilities, and backgrounds. Arab students experience difficulty in managing the organization of the functions of writing and the process of reading to writing. Further, the interference of the Arabic language (L1) with English (L2) hinders them in critical thinking and the process of rearranging sentences and paraphrasing them to make a new structure without changing the meaning of a particular sentence.

Lakkis and Abdel Malak (2000) compared the prepositional applications of Arabic amongst a group of Arab students studying English at the American University at

Beirut. They explored similar characteristics of both languages in terms of prepositions. While a few structures are similar in both languages, many others are not. It was shown in this study that some characteristics lead to negative and positive transfers in certain areas. A clear example of the negative effect of the language differences on Saudi EFL learners is the difference in the use of vowels. In English language writing the vowels are visible but not necessarily pronounced and English also has more vowels than Arabic. Vowels are considered not important in Arabic language and are not obvious in Arabic writing. This is difficult for Saudi EFL students to apply English writing rules which do not exist in their Arabic language. As a consequence of their non-reliance on writing vowels according to the rules of English, Saudi learners have a tendency to forget and neglect to include these vowels when writing in English; researchers have called this tendency vowel blindness (Khan, 2013).

Thus, as with many other languages, the structure of Arabic is different from that of English. In Arabic, writers tend to use more metaphors and write longer sentences compared with writers in English (Fadda, 2012). This is why many Arab students often write long sentences when writing in English and give long explanations when they try to clarify their points and ideas. In addition, Arab students need to learn a different alphabet, in contrast with students from European and other countries which use the Latin alphabet, as well as completely different characteristics of the new language, such as verbs, nouns, vowels and prepositions. In addition, Saudi Arabian, and, indeed, all Arab students, must learn to write from left to right in English, while Arabic is written from right to left; all these differences make academic writing for Saudi students challenging (Ankawi, 2015; Fadda; 2012; Khan; 2013).

3.9 The importance of academic writing in higher education

Learning and acquiring a good grasp of academic writing is a necessity for EFL students in order to stay ahead in their studies. English academic writing is also very important for academic researchers to take part in scientific research and participate as well as contribute to educational development. English academic writing has become an academic tool that is used all over the world for educational and communication purposes. It has been claimed that around 65% of journal articles are written in the English language (Hess & Ghawi, 1997). Thus, academic writing is very important in general and even more important as a part of the academic language community (Schmied, 2011). English academic writing is used for numerous academic purposes. It is used in research, teaching and learning in a large number of universities all over the

world in which English is employed as an international language. Most of the EFL academic teachers in these institutions are native English speakers, and the students are non-native speakers who use English as the only means of communicating among themselves. Academic writing plays a vital role at such universities, where it has a central place in the academic curriculum. Research conducted on students' academic writing at universities has illustrated the important role that this skill plays in the academic process in general and in academic curricula in particular (Fukao & Fujii, 2001; Jones, 1999; Leki & Carson, 1994; Zhu, 2004).

EFL/ESL academic writing, as a multifaceted cognitive skill, is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it clears the thinking process and helps in the generation of creative ideas. Writing is also more than just jotting down ideas on paper. It is an elaborate process of generating ideas and translating them into meaningful words. It is a way through which ethics and values are developed. It is a way of exploring and penetrating complex worlds and developing and forming deep and lasting social relationships (Tchudi, 1999). EFL/ESL writing has always been considered an important skill in teaching and learning. As Rao (2007) stated, EFL writing is beneficial in two different ways: firstly, it motivates and encourages students in thinking, organizing their thoughts, and in developing their ability to summarize, analyse and criticize; secondly, it motivates and strengthens students' ability to learn, think and reflect in the English language.

Writing is very important in the educational process from various aspects. The abilities of a student can be assessed based on their writing and then evaluated. Many studies conducted on academic writing have shown that, through academic writing, many aspects of educational development can be achieved. Thus, through writing, students' levels of learning proficiency in the field can be assessed and the instructors can have a firm idea of the nature of the students' understanding of the subject matter, any needs that should be met and weak points addressed. This would allow instructors to meet and satisfy students' needs not only in academic writing, but also in other skills (Fukao & Fujii, 2001; Jones, 1999; Krause, 2001; Leki & Carson, 1994; Lillis, 2001; MacLellan, 2004; Torrance, Thomas, & Robinson, 1999; Zhu, 2004).

The ability to write is considered a major indicator of students' academic potential and success within many tertiary institutions (Jones, 1999). A number of professional scholars in the field of writing education have argued that improvements to learning can be made through writing (Bacha, 2002; Ellis, 2004; Ellis, Taylor, & Drury, 2005; Krause, 2001; Lillis, 2001; Manchón & Roca de Larios, 2007; Zamel, 1998). The reason for this is that students' writing can enable them to acquire knowledge and a number of learning skills (Ellis, 2004) and, through writing, cognitive skills such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and inference are polished. Moreover, cognitive writing skills such as achieving cohesion, summarizing, and text organization are acquired and improved through the practice of writing (Bacha, 2002). In this regard, writing is largely considered a multifunctional tool of teaching and learning situations in higher education.

According to (Coffin, 2003; Gillett, 2009; Murray & Hughes, 2008), a student's success at university can be measured through his or her writing. Writing is used by instructors to establish what has actually been understood and learned about a specific academic subject. Thus, writing can be used as a tool to comprehend the quality of a student's thinking and learning. It is very important for EFL students to learn and master both basic and advanced academic writing skills. Grabe and Kaplan (1996) stated that students in EFL contexts need to learn a variety of English writing skills, from writing a single paragraph to acquiring summarizing abilities, and the skill to produce essays and generate professional articles. Moreover, it is important for EFL students who intend to become EFL teachers not only to be able to write different types of essay, such as expository, argumentative and narrative, during the course and under examination conditions, but also to have the ability to compose formal letters, research reports and lesson plans (Al-Hazmi & Scholfield, 2007). Tahaineh (2010) explained that writing is an important skill for university students because they have to use it for note taking, essay writing, answering written questions, and composition writing and so on. It is also important for both undergraduate and postgraduate students whose major is English and who need to answer subjective questions related to their literature and linguistics courses in the form of multiple paragraphs with explanations. Therefore, students' abilities to master these writing skills will be reflected in the future after they have graduated as English language teachers. Moreover, John (2003) mentioned that success in any fields which require academic writing depends on students' abilities to deal with different writing genres, such as summaries, essays, reviews and other kinds of

academic writing. Thus, as a result of learning academic writing and having a good understanding of it, students' success in academic studies is more likely to be achieved. Therefore, the mastery of academic writing skills by EFL students will be reflected in their success in their further academic studies, if they graduate as English language teachers or intend to complete postgraduate studies. Neglecting the teaching of different kinds of academic writing skills could contribute to an inadequate academic writing education, which will affect students' outcomes during undergraduate and postgraduate studies, as well as the educational process in general.

3.10 English writing textbooks in Taif University

In Saudi Universities basic English is still taught 1-2 times/ a week for one year in the preparatory year (foundation year) as the basic requirement for university students who are not competent in the English language. The English Language curriculum of Saudi universities varies although they are regulated. Picard & Elyas (2010) illustrated that the teaching curriculums in the universities of Saudi Arabia are determined by the deans. This is then passed to the heads of department, then the English Committee and finally reaches the language instructors who are responsible for conveying the information to the students based on the policy provided to them. Additionally, the government, with the help of the educational institutes and bodies, is generating proper syllabuses for diverse educational levels. Moreover, the government of Saudi Arabia is providing financial aid to the educational institutions through the recruitment of English professional and qualified teachers, construction of language labs, curriculum development and conducting training sessions for teachers Mahboob & Elyas, (2014). In the Taif University context, the English language centre and the foreign language department are responsible for teaching the English language. The English language centre is responsible for teaching the English language in the preparatory year and the foreign language department is responsible for teaching the English language major. Students join the department to specialise in English and may graduate as English language teachers.

3.10.1 English writing textbooks in preparatory year (foundation year)

The English language centre is responsible for teaching the English language in the preparatory year. The textbooks used in the preparatory year are integrated books which integrate the teaching of the main four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in one textbook. Students study two textbooks during one year as a foundation year

before specialising in any university disciplines and joining one of the faculties at the university. One of the main purposes of the preparatory year is to prepare students to have good English language proficiency in general and English writing skills in particular enabling them to cope with specialist subjects where English is both the language instruction and assessment where a lot of writing is required for the assignments and exams, where students studied English used inappropriate English textbooks and graduated from high school with low level of English language proficiency. Albedaiwi (2014) conducted a study regarding EFL materials in public schools in Saudi Arabia which investigated teachers' engagement with materials/textbooks. It suggested an approach engaging English teachers in order to design learning experiences, materials and textbooks that met the needs of their students that could help develop the four main skills. After finishing the preparatory year students are supposed to have an acceptable level of English language proficiency and good English writing skills enabling them to be familiar with the expected written assignments they are going to do in their future studies and to have mastered the general knowledge and requirements of expectations in their new specialisms.

Textbooks in the preparatory year are very important and play a crucial role in order to achieve the purposes of the preparatory year which is preparing students for their further academic studies. If the English language textbooks do not satisfy these requirements of the preparatory year and students' needs for their further studies with acceptable English proficiency in general and English writing in particular, that means there may be a problem in the English language textbooks taught in the preparatory year. This supported by Al-Otaibi (2015) who mentioned in her study that one of the challenges with English language programs is the lack of appropriate textbooks and curriculums suitable as an intensive English language program for the preparatory year. The content of the textbook especially for social science students is too basic and repeats the basic English writing skills that students have already studied at intermediate and high school levels. Moreover, Huwari & Al-Khasawneh (2013) conducted a small study in Saudi Arabia which explored the reasons behind the weaknesses of writing among preparatory year students at Taibah University. The study sampled only 10 preparatory year students and the findings concluded that students had grammatical mistakes and problems, weak knowledge and understanding of English writing, less practice and less educational background. Huwari & Al-Khasawneh's research suggested that the students did not know how to write a main topic; they did not understand the process of writing and

there was not enough practice in writing English. However, the sample used in the study was small and the findings cannot be generalised or utilised. They utilised a qualitative semi-structured interview which highlighted the issue that the students had little knowledge of the type and level of academic writing required for further academic studies. Similarly, Younes, & Arabia, (2016) conducted a study about English courses in the preparatory year at Tabuk University (Saudi Arabia). The study revealed that the English language courses focused on teaching general English, improving communication skills only and did not prepare students for academic studies. This was replaced by ESP (English for specific purposes) courses for the preparatory year (foundation year) and the study strongly recommended that the courses and syllabus in the PYP (pre- year preparatory) (foundation year) should focus on teaching ESP to the students at Tabuk University. However, Younes's purpose of study was investigating the effectiveness of using an ESP course for PYP students at Tabuk University from a teaching perspective. The study was all about general English language skills and not specifically about writing. Younes's study focused on teachers' perspectives and excluded students' perspectives who were the most important. Students were more involved in the educational process, and could describe the experiences more regarding what they were exposed to and experienced about the English course. This factor was not emphasised to any significant extent. Consequently, Younes's study gave no indication of the difficulties facing students and no student perspectives of the realities of actual academic studies after finishing the foundation year. Additionally, McMullen, (2009), who produced a study on the value and attributes of an effective preparatory English program from the perspective of Saudi University students, did not concentrate on English academic writing, but suggested that after graduation from high school, students realised that their English proficiency was not adequate for academia.

Therefore, if the content of the English textbooks of the preparatory year at Taif University did not fill in the gap of lack of knowledge between high school education and higher education, they did not prepare students for their academic studies and increase the students' level of English language proficiency. This is one of the main objectives of the preparatory year. To have just a little knowledge specifically about writing, given that students have already studied English in high schools, they need more information to prepare and help university students in their academic studies. This indicated that the content of the textbooks for teaching English language in general and writing in particular may be very basic and so may not have achieved the purpose of the

preparatory year and satisfied the students' needs of preparing them for their academic studies. According to Sheldon (1988), the textbook is considered the main element of any ELT program. Thus, textbooks need to be tailored and piloted to satisfy the university requirements as well as students' needs to meet the general purposes of the preparatory year. In the same way, Al-Maliki (2013) mentioned that the preparatory year programme is considered as a middle stage between public school education and university education. It plays an important role in preparing students for academic studies giving them the opportunity to learn and practise skills that will be used in higher education such as English language skills, research skills, and skills of communication.

3.10.2 English writing textbooks at foreign language department

The foreign language department is responsible for teaching the English language major which students join in order to specialise in English and graduate as English language teachers. In the foreign language department there are three writing courses, Writing I, Writing II, and Writing III, and there are three writing textbooks for these courses.

However, if the English language textbooks of the preparatory year do not satisfy the requirements of the preparatory year then students' will lack acceptable English proficiency in general and English writing in particular for their further studies. Students joining the department of foreign languages, majoring in English language studies, have very little information of the basic English writing skills and specifically a low level of English language proficiency. This means there is a problem with the English language textbooks taught in preparatory year and as a result students will face difficulties in studying academic writing in their further academic studies. Tahaineh (2010) explains that writing is an important skill for university students because they have to use it for essay writing, answering written questions and composition writing. For undergraduate and postgraduate students whose major is English, writing skills are important because they need to answer subjective questions related to their literature and linguistics courses, as these questions need to be answered in the form of multiple paragraphs with explanations. Therefore, students' ability to master these writing skills will be reflected when they graduate as English language teachers.

Writing courses and textbooks should be tailored and piloted to satisfy the university requirements as well as students' needs to be suitable for EFL students, otherwise students will face difficulties in academic writing. Al-Refa'ai (2001); Al-Buainain

(2011) and Albedaiwi (2014) have reported difficulties facing students in academic writing in the English language departments in different, non-Saudi contexts. For example, Al-Buainain, (2011) conducted a study about writing as part of Qatar University's review of university courses, aiming to identify the problems and key issues behind EFL writing. The study examined the scripts of 40 female students who were majoring in English language studies at Qatar University, and who were undertaking their first writing course. Al-Buainain suggested that different materials from different sources are needed when teaching writing skills, rather than a dependency on the official textbook alone. Therefore, the proper way to learn how to write is by practising writing. Al-Buainain also recommended the revision of writing courses and teaching materials. Similarly, Al-Refa'ai (2001) conducted a study in Yemeni context about reasons for the low academic achievement in the English language at Aden University. It found that teaching methods, the courses used, teaching materials, and the methods of assessment utilized by instructors were major factors affecting students' accomplishment in the English language.

3.11 Issues faced by EFL students in academic writing

This section focuses on the most common issues encountered by EFL students in cross-cultural academic writing as discussed in previous studies of academic writing in the literature reviewed for this research. The main issues involved in academic writing have been identified and classified in the literature as learners' study skills, teaching practices, and contextual issues. A number of sub issues emerging from each main issue are discussed in detail in this section and linked to the context of this study.

In recent years, there has been increasing emphasis placed on the importance of English academic writing as one of the skills required by students for achieving academic success. This includes answering open questions in exams which need good writing skills to be answered and writing the required assignments properly. Students are required to have writing skills in order to be successful and to realize that the importance of academic writing skills extends beyond the classroom (Kalikokha, (2008). Moreover, there has also been a notable increase in the number of students who aim to obtain postgraduate degrees from international institutions. In order to meet the entry requirements of these institutions, candidates are required to have good communication skills, including writing.

Despite the strong emphasis placed on writing instruction, most EFL students face difficulties with academic writing (Kalikokha, (2008). Moreover, debates between English writing lecturers and lecturers in various academic disciplines have frequently centred on the decrease in students' writing standards and weaknesses in their writing ability. Some of these discussions have concluded that a lack of research on factors contributing to poor academic writing outcomes has led to a distinct dearth of means to tackle the challenges students face. Other than the challenges inherent in writing itself, the academic culture of a university also increases the writing difficulties students face (Barker, 2000; Krause, 2001). For example, it has been observed that, because of the limited experience and inadequate instruction of teaching in research and academic writing genres, a large number of students have poor knowledge of academic writing and its demands and requirements when start studying their tertiary-level courses (Creme & Lea, 2003; Evans & Green, 2007; Harklau, 2003; Nampota & Thompson, 2008; Spack, 1998).

There are numerous issues in academic writing of which EFL teachers should be aware. These issues include students' linguistic challenges, such as weaknesses in language proficiency and literacy, lack of cognitive development, different cultural and educational backgrounds, as well as ethnic influences (Cumming, 2001; Leki, 2000; Raimes, 1998; Spack, 1997). Tutors should also pay close attention to students' attitudes towards learning, as well as to their level of motivation to acquire linguistic, cognitive, and academic skills. In this respect, academic goals, aptitude, anxiety, cognitive strategy use, language awareness and age, among others, are known to be factors that influence learning (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004). The most common issues influencing EFL writing have emerged through the many studies investigating and exploring EFL writing issues globally. For instance, Al-Khasawneh and Huwari (2013) conducted a small study on EFL academic writing in the Saudi context at Taibah University. Although the study applied to students in the foundation year only and was not sufficiently comprehensive, it identified four main issues: grammatical weakness, knowledge and understanding, insufficient practice, and educational background, which the researchers considered to be the main factors influencing EFL students' writing performance. They illustrated that the four factors that emerged from their study were similar to those identified in many other international studies with certain differences according to the contexts of the other research, which also indicates that the context of a study is very important.

Thus, in reviewing studies related to EFL academic writing, the researcher of the present study found that there are a number of issues faced by EFL students in academic writing. The majority of these issues are related to EFL learners' study skills, teaching practices and contextual issues. The aforementioned academic writing issues which reviewed in previous studies and identified are discussed in detail in the following sections.

3.11.1 Linguistic Issues of EFL learners of academic writing

The most common linguistic issues facing EFL students in academic writing mentioned in the previous literature (Hyland, 2000; Al-Sawalha, and Chow ,2012; Evans & Green, 2007; Alfaki, 2015; John, 2012) are poor EFL proficiency, lack of vocabulary for use in writing and poor or no prior knowledge of writing and writing styles as well as the organisational structure of writing. These issues will be illustrated in this section in detail.

3.11.1.1 Poor of EFL Proficiency Level

One of the factors that face EFL university students in producing academic writing is their low level of English language proficiency. University students should have at least the minimum requirements of English proficiency and be able to use the four main skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) to a level acceptable for students at university (Buis, 2007). The researcher further maintains that, without a certain amount of English vocabulary, a grounding in the basic grammar of the English language and knowledge of the proper structure of different forms of writing, students will not be able to produce a piece of writing of even adequate quality. This is consistent with Sidek (2010) who stated that English proficiency is crucial for EFL students and, without an adequate level of English language proficiency, students cannot communicate or succeeds in using any form of writing, whether to answer examination questions or to generate and express thoughts and ideas in an appropriate written form. It is important for English as a second language (ESL) students, who are studying courses in English, particularly students who have specialised in the English language, to have acquired an acceptable level of both language proficiency and basic information in terms of how to write in English. According to Kellogg and Raulerson (2007), having the ability to produce effective writing is essential for university students to be able to succeed in higher education.

There is growing evidence that the lack of proficiency of university ESL students in academic writing affects their overall academic performance. Students with low English language proficiency face many obstacles in the university, they experience problems in communicating in class, it is difficult for them to write and even more difficult for them to generate and express complex ideas. This is a serious concern, as success in university depends on writing and students are often judged by their ability and competence in writing skills (Hyland, 2000). Studies in second language (L2) writing have shown that undergraduate students have a low level of English language proficiency and, as a consequence, students produce poor academic writing. Martirosyan, Hwang, & Wanjohi, (2015) conducted a study investigating the impact of English proficiency on the academic performance of international students in the USA. They specifically examined the impact of language proficiency of the four main skills of the academic performance of the students. A self-report questionnaire was used and distributed to 59 students studying at North Central Louisiana in the United States. Students were asked to evaluate their English language proficiency. They were also asked whether they had difficulties in understanding the main four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and whether their language proficiency affected their academic achievement. The results showed that less than half of the participants had difficulties in the main four skills which indicated that an increase in English language proficiency in turn led to an increase in academic achievement. In the same vein, Buis (2007) stated that a major problem is that students do not have the necessary linguistic knowledge and writing skills. Similarly, Larios, et al, (1999) claimed that L2 proficiency played a role in their participants' use of restructuring strategies in L2 writing. Later, De Larios, et al, (2001), in their study on the temporal analysis of formulation processes in L1 and L2 writing, found that L2 learners with a higher level of proficiency spent less time focusing on the generation and construction of ideas when writing in English. Further, Olivas and Li (2006) connected low second-language proficiency levels in English with the poor academic performance of international students studying at both university and college levels in the United States. Similarly, Mousavi and Kashefian's (2011) study, conducted at the Universiti Kebangsaan in Malaysia, investigated the general errors made by postgraduate-level Iranian students and found that the students faced difficulties in academic writing. The main reasons for their difficulties were that English was a foreign language to them and little attention had been paid to the students in providing support for them to learn how to write in English.

In addition, a number of studies have illustrated that weak academic writing caused by poor English language proficiency also occurs in many Arabic countries, including Saudi Arabia. Al-Sawalha and Chow (2012) conducted a study to investigate how writing proficiency affected the writing process of a selected group of English language and literature students at Yarmouk University in Jordan. A questionnaire about writing strategies was completed by 60 English language and literature students at the university and revealed significant results. It was found that English proficiency affected the writing processes used among the students and so they rarely used writing processes. The study revealed that most of the students who participated in the study were usually unable to express complex ideas in their writing, as they lacked the appropriate vocabulary, both general and technical, which reflected low English language proficiency. Similarly, according to Tahaine (2009), the majority of Jordanian students come to study at university with modest English language proficiency are unwilling or unable to write well in English, since writing in English is considered an extremely difficult task in itself. The students' difficulties usually involve English language proficiency in general, but particularly the mechanics of writing, grammar, the organization of ideas, starting to write, writing a strong conclusion, generating ideas, expanding the ideas and using appropriate vocabulary. However, they graduated from English departments in Jordanian universities with approximately the same grade range compared with when they entered university and so had made no progress in their English writing and in English proficiency. The findings of the aforementioned studies conducted on L2 writing indicate clearly that low English language proficiency is one of the issues that influence the academic writing of EFL students and reduce students' ability to produce an acceptable piece of writing. As some of the aforementioned studies were conducted in Arab countries and had a similar context to that of this study, the factor of low English language proficiency might be one of the issues affecting the academic writing of Saudi EFL students at Taif University.

However, not all studies have reached the same conclusions. Some studies have revealed that students' writing ability is not associated with their language proficiency or content. For example, Raimes (2006) found little correspondence between proficiency, writing ability, and students' writing strategies. Raimes (2006) conducted a study on EFL writing and examined eight ESL students, revealing that there was no strong evidence of the impact of language proficiency on the students' writing ability

and few connections between the students' L2 proficiency and writing ability. However, the sample of the study was very small and did not reflect strong evidence that writing ability is not associated with their language proficiency. It was not a strong study to rely on. Along similar lines, Cumming (2006) demonstrated that L2 proficiency could be considered an important factor in developing the quality of EFL students' writing production. However, in his investigation of 23 young adults' writing performance, he illustrated that language proficiency had no obvious influence on the processes of writing. Sasaki (2002) supported Cumming's argument in her study of Japanese EFL expert and beginner writers with regard to the correlation between writing ability and strategy use. She also identified that there was no comparison between the writing production of expert Japanese EFL writers and beginner EFL writers for more than one reason. However, the study focused on expert EFL writers and novice writers comparing which one of them applied the process approach demonstrating the relationship between the level of language proficiency and the writing ability.

3.11.1.2 Lack of Prior Knowledge of English academic writing

In addition to the difficulties that EFL students face in having a low level of English language proficiency, a lack of knowledge of English writing skills is also considered one of the issues that EFL students face in producing academic writing. According to Heller (1999), prior knowledge is an important factor in comprehension and composition. Brainstorming only works if the writer has prior knowledge which later encourages him or her to write down creative and innovative ideas. Moreover, prior knowledge has a positive effect on the learning and writing skills of the writer. It also enhances the writer's confidence (Myhill, 2005). Ferris and Hedgcock (2004) further stressed that background knowledge of English language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and experience are distinctive characteristics which mark the difference between native and non-native speakers of English. Furthermore, awareness of background knowledge and writing strategies are evident in ESL/EFL students' reactions to texts and subjects, in their responses to the activities of ESL writing classrooms, and in their understanding of and familiarity with the rhetorical patterns of academic and professional discourse communities. Thus, if students know little of academic writing skills, they may possibly exhibit poor attitudes towards them (Evans & Green, 2007; Harklau, 2003; Nampota & Thompson, 2007).

The move of students from a secondary school level to a tertiary level of education should be taken into account and their new experiences with writing considered. There is a possibility that many students do not feel comfortable with this transition to university level and are not familiar with different kinds of essay writing (Hyland, 2000). Students in their first year of university face great challenges with such activities and the more complex styles of writing required, as they are not accustomed to these at the secondary level. Students need time to develop an interest in such activities and consequently a significant gap is created between academic teachers and new students in the latter's understanding of the new requirements and the conventions of academic writing expected by the teachers. Thus, students are unlikely to be able to satisfy teachers' requirements and conventions regarding academic writing unless they already have knowledge of such academic writing skills (Barker, 2000; Creme & Lea, 2003; Krause, 2001; Lea & Street, 2000, 1998; Lillis, 2001; Vardi, 2000). This gap is evident in some studies such as (Leki, 1995; Anderson, 2009; El-Mortaji, 2001; Reid, 1993; Scordaras, 2003) that have been carried out investigating the opinions of both students and teachers with regard to different kinds of academic writing. The way in which ESL/EFL students observe their content area and writing teachers' views of good writing were examined by Leki (1995). A lack of alignment was found between the students' opinions of their instructors' perceptions and the actual views of the teachers. Two factors increased the misunderstanding and the difference between the students' and the teachers' perception of the nature of academic writing. The first factor was the specific writing requirements of different courses and the second was the variety of teachers' viewpoints on good writing. Therefore, if students have little knowledge of text structure, writing styles and topics, they might face difficulty in terms of comprehension and composition (Anderson, 2009; El-Mortaji, 2001; Reid, 1993).

Most EFL students studying in universities are not familiar with formal writing courses throughout their secondary schooling and are introduced to such courses at university level. Eventually, both context and inadequate English language proficiency compound the academic writing difficulties faced by ESL students; these difficulties have been confirmed by relevant literature (Hyland, 2000; Anderson, 2009; El-Mortaji, 2001; Reid, 1993; Giridharan, 2011) on ESL university students' experiences. Many students are not aware of their poor writing ability while on foundation courses. Although many ESL students at university have a basic understanding of grammar rules and writing skills, few have mastered academic writing skills and are able to write academically at

the levels expected of them (Giridharan, 2011). In the same way, Reid (1993) indicated that when the form of writing and content are familiar to the writer, no difficulties are faced by the writer or reader but, when both are unfamiliar, the writer faces difficulties and problems in producing a suitable piece of writing. Therefore, it is important for EFL students to have the required knowledge of writing skills, or at least the basic knowledge and techniques of writing skills, and a general understanding of how learners learn to write. Academic writing is often developed in students in formal instructional settings, although proficiency in academic writing may be enhanced by cognitive and educational development. Thus, academic writing is often considered overwhelming by ESL students due to their lack of knowledge of academic writing skills.

However, the variety of the writing requirements of different disciplines can confuse students, and they are often further confused when they realise that one style of writing seems to be suitable for one discipline or teacher but not appropriate for another field or another instructor. Students find it difficult and confusing to apply this knowledge of writing skills to writing in different disciplines, thus general advice regarding writing skills and choosing one that is suitable to a given task is likely to be beneficial to them (Lea & Street, 2000). In contrast, Hyland (2000) argued that it is not a good idea to present writing skills as universal standards that can simply be copied and applied in different contexts, as this misleads students and gives the impression that academic writing lacks variability. At the same time, this approach will not afford students the opportunity to learn the different types of writing they might need to do their jobs after graduating. According to Elbow (1991), different jobs have their own types of writing that are suitable within their own discourse community, and have their own specific purposes, audiences, and genres. Vardi (2000) referred to students' confusion with regard to the different requirements of the various forms of writing and to the students' lack of knowledge of these kinds of writing skills. Different requirements of particular forms of writing are expected when writing for different teachers and in different disciplines. A problem may be that though instructors are fully aware of variations in writing requirements across disciplines, they do not often explicitly convey to students the need to be aware of the variations in writing requirements that are helpful in satisfying writing purposes in different disciplines (Barker, 2000; Lea & Street, 2000, 1999; Lillis, 2001, 1999).

3.11.1.3 Lack of English vocabulary

In addition to difficulties relating to a low level of English language proficiency and the poor knowledge of English writing skills that EFL students face, lack of English language vocabulary is also considered an issue that EFL students experience when trying to produce academic writing. The learning and teaching of vocabulary is considered an important factor in EFL/ESL learning, as written and oral communicative competence cannot be achieved without vocabulary. Thus, lack of vocabulary learning and teaching has negative effects on the success of the learning process in a second language in general, including the writing skill (Hadjer, 2014). According to Mora-Flores, (2008), the process of writing is achieved by transferring knowledge and thoughts through vocabulary into a written form and EFL students use their vocabulary knowledge in order to generate ideas to build blocks for writing. Therefore, having a wide vocabulary is important in learning a second language in general and in L2 writing in particular. Without an adequate amount of vocabulary, EFL students cannot communicate well, whether orally or in writing. In other words, with a limited vocabulary, students struggle to produce even simple sentences in a second language; therefore, generating thoughts and ideas and answering open questions becomes a difficult or even impossible task for EFL students.

Vocabulary plays an important role in developing and enhancing writing ability and a lack of vocabulary causes serious issues for EFL students when attempting to produce academic writing. Ediger (1999) stated that it is necessary to have a variety of terms on which to draw when selecting a sufficiently wide range of words to convey a particular meaning accurately in speaking and writing, as this is considered part of the art of language. Thus, the amount and kind of EFL students' vocabulary will have a direct impact on the quality and accuracy of their writing. Therefore, improvement in writing will be achieved by vocabulary development in enhancing students' writing performance. A piece of writing should consist of a variety and range of appropriate vocabulary, as well as good grammar and sentence structure (Alamirew, 2005). In contrast, according to Reid (1983, in Melese, (2007), some EFL students attempt to draw the readers' attention by trying to convey the purpose of a piece of writing through the use of appropriate vocabulary. However, putting appropriate words in the appropriate place is considered a problem for students writing in a second language. For instance, students tend to use attractive and 'big' words in their essays to attract the attention of the reader and to impress their teacher. The effort students make to impress

the reader and teacher leads to vocabulary problems, such as writing inappropriate words in an inappropriate place (Alfaki, 2015).

A number of studies globally and in Arabic contexts, have revealed that students are unable to generate and express complex ideas in their writing because they lack appropriate vocabulary, both general and technical (Fukao & Fujii, 2001; Leki & Carson, 1997, 1994; Mahfoudhi, 2003). In this vein, Hawthorne (2008) stated that a lack of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge led to poor writing skills. Similarly, students who have insufficient language competency tend to encounter a number of linguistic difficulties with vocabulary and sentence construction (Chan, 2010; Zhou, 2009). Similarly, Salem (2007) stated that EFL learners encountered difficulties in writing effectively in English because of their limited vocabulary, which hindered them when writing and made the writing process difficult for them. Salem (2007) explored the perceptions of 50 male undergraduate students majoring in English in relation to writing in English at the University of Al-Azhar in Egypt. He showed that the majority of the students felt overwhelmed when they were required to write on a certain topic because of their lack of a number of linguistic features, vocabulary being one of them. The students reported that they did not know how to start, how to develop their ideas or how to conclude their essays. Al-Sawalha and Chow (2012) conducted a study on the effects of proficiency on the writing processes of EFL students at a Jordanian university. After distributing questionnaires to 60 English language and literature students at Yarmouk University in Jordan, they found that the students were lacking appropriate vocabulary, both general and technical, which, in turn, affected the writing process itself.

3.11.1.4 Lack of organizational structure of different styles of writing

In addition to a low level of English language proficiency, limited knowledge of English writing skills and a lack of English language vocabulary, lacking the organizational structures for the different styles of writing is also considered one of the issues that EFL students face when producing a piece of academic writing. The organization of writing is defined as the main structure of the production of an English text, which consists of a connected introduction, main body and conclusion to convey certain ideas in a logical sequence. The organization of writing also includes cohesion and coherence, connecting and linking words (conjunctions) between paragraphs, such as ‘first of all’, ‘moreover’, ‘in addition’, ‘finally’, ‘to sum up’, ‘to conclude’, ‘in

conclusion' and so on. According to Medve and Takac (2013), coherence means arranging ideas in a logical sequence, while cohesive ties include reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctions, and lexical ties affecting text structure.

Thus, an organized structure in EFL writing is crucial for EFL university students and learning the correct structure for writing in English is essential in the production of an acceptable piece of writing. However, many EFL undergraduate students face difficulties in the organizational structuring of EFL writing. EFL students consider organizational structure a barrier to producing appropriate academic writing. Therefore, organizing the structure of different kinds of writing is important for ESL university students and must be mastered. ESL students need to know or learn how to build and organize a body of writing as the main structure of any kind of writing in order to be able to produce a readable piece of text. Many researchers in the field of second language writing education have shown that students who are studying English as a second language are required to have an appropriate command of content, organization, structure, and mechanics when writing in order to deliver the correct meaning to the reader, without a basic knowledge of these four writing elements L2 students will face a great deal of linguistic difficulty and complexity in L2 writing (Brown, 2007; Tribble, 1996; Chan, 2010; Hinkel, 2001; John, 2012; Mu & Carrington, 2007; Thompson & Ye, 1991; Zhou, 2009). Similarly, Alfaki (2015) stated that to be able to write effectively, a number of elements are required, such as a high degree of organization in order to develop ideas and information, a high level of accuracy to avoid any ambiguity of meaning, the use of complex grammatical devices for focus and emphasis, as well as a careful choice of vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and sentence structures to satisfy the writing style requirements of the subject matter and the eventual readers.

A number of studies conducted in different ESL/EFL contexts in general and Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, in particular show that organization in EFL writing is a serious issue facing EFL students and that many EFL/ESL students are unable to produce a well-connected and coherent piece of writing (e.g., studies have asserted that Yemeni, Egyptian and Sudanese students have certain weaknesses in terms of coherence and cohesion, as manifested in the students' written texts). In this respect, Zakaria and Mugaddam (2013) assessed the writing performance of Sudanese EFL university students and found that they encountered difficulties in the use of writing strategies such as pre-activities and organization. The study also revealed that these EFL students lacked awareness of cohesive devices in their writing; that is, they produced

disconnected sentences and incoherent paragraphs. The study concluded that the students' language problems, lack of organizational skills, and inability to meet the audience's expectations were among the factors that caused them to produce less informative written texts. Furthermore, Abdallah, (2000), for example, found that students had a problem in terms of coherence and were not able to connect thoughts and paragraphs properly. Thus, most of their paragraphs had misleading divisions and irrelevance, which eventually reduced the overall quality of their writing. Similarly, Al-Khasawneh & Maher, (2010) reported that many problems faced the EFL learners in his study when they wrote in English, such as organizing their ideas, because the students rarely wrote in English. Al-Hammadi and Sidek (2015) have mentioned that Arab EFL learners generally, and Yemeni students who were the particular focus of their study, face difficulties such as not knowing how to organize their ideas when writing in English because they do not practise writing in English. This was supported by Olateju, (2006) who attributed the difficulty that EFL Nigerian ESL students faced in writing organization to the students' lack of exposure to the essentials of the English language and the teachers' neglect of teaching coherence and cohesive devices. Thus, to overcome this problem, students need to learn how to use cohesive devices in writing, while teachers need to appreciate the importance of coherence and cohesion and then endeavour to raise students' awareness of them when writing in English.

Although the aforementioned linguistic aspects are common issues related to EFL learners and have an influence on EFL students' academic writing performance, there are also, according to previous studies, psychological issues related to EFL learners which also have an impact on students' academic writing. These psychological issues are discussed in the following section.

3.11.2 Psychological Issues of EFL learners of academic writing

In academic writing, psychologically affective issues, such as beliefs and attitudes towards writing, writing anxiety, and writing complexities, have been identified as having a strong influence on students' writing skills. The following sections explain and discuss the main findings of some of the research work that has examined these influential issues in L2 academic writing. As a reflection of the significance of the psychological issues involved in learning any foreign or second language, this section focuses on what the research has to say about these issues in relation to ESL/EFL writing development. Thus, some of the psychological issues that affect EFL students' academic writing that have been mentioned in previous studies are reviewed and

highlighted here, such as students' attitudes towards academic writing, students' motivation level, self-confidence and writing anxiety. The aforementioned issues seem to play an influential role in ESL/EFL students' writing development, as reviewed below.

3.11.2.1 Students' Attitudes towards academic writing

Psychological issues include students' attitudes towards academic writing and their effects on EFL students' writing. An attitude is composed of three elements: cognitive, affective, and behavioural (Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Wenden, 1991). According to the descriptions given by Mantle-Bromley (1995) and Wenden (1991), the first element of cognitive work comprises thoughts or beliefs on a subject. The affective component refers to the level of attraction or repulsion towards an object; in other words, what is liked and disliked. Lastly, the element of behaviour directs people to react in a particular way. In academic writing, a student's attitude towards writing is considered to be one of the most important factors that have a major impact on the student's writing interests and behaviour. Much of the research carried out indicates that attitudes have a direct effect on students' writing preferences (Cheng, 2002; Lavelle & Zuercher, 2001; Wynn, 1998; Cava, 2000). For example, Wynn (1998) stated that collaborative learning has a positive effect on writing anxiety, writing attitude and increased writing quality of undergraduate students at the first year and found writing enjoyable, while students with negative attitudes were likely to find writing intimidating and thus try to avoid it as far as possible.

Cheng, (2002) and Lavelle and Zuercher (2001) observed that some students' reasons for their dislike of writing were that they found writing processes complex and time consuming, whereas the wish to improve and enhance their self-expression and knowledge were some of the reasons others gave for enjoying writing. Along the same lines, the writing production of students was also influenced by the attitude of a student towards writing. For example, Cava's (2000) research on a group of second language students regarding their attitudes towards their writing experience showed that students who had negative attitudes were distracted and dissatisfied with the writing process, which became the reason for their unwillingness to enjoy processes such as planning, composition and revision. The students, who have the desire to learn and engage in writing processes, did so without spending much effort and time. Also, students who have positive attitude towards learning writing were more committed to apply the

difficult demands of the writing process. Students who had writing experience and prior knowledge of writing skills have been observed to deal with the requirements of writing programmes appropriately and to have positive attitudes towards writing, while those with little or no writing experience faced problems and challenges in writing assignments academically. Such difficulties may create or develop into negative attitudes towards writing in inexperienced students (Taylor & Drury, 2005). It seems to the present researcher that there is more than one reason for EFL students at Taif University not being willing to engage in writing.

3.11.2.2 Writing Anxiety for EFL learners

Another psychological issue that seems to have an influence on students' writing is writing anxiety. There is a high degree of writing anxiety among EFL students and writing activities tend to be the last choice for EFL students if they have to choose from the main language skills. In addition, EFL students avoid engaging in writing activities unless they have to, which is a strong indication of writing anxiety. Anderson (2009) defines reluctant writers as people who are slow readers, have problems with spelling and punctuation and are inattentive; they pay little attention to their work and the work carried out by them is usually untidy. They offer several excuses for avoiding writing, such as 'I have lost my pen somewhere', and show writing anxiety while sharing their work in a group. The main reason behind EFL students' writing anxiety is, in the opinion of Buis (2007), students' development of a sense of their limitations when it comes to writing, which makes them nervous and uneasy.

Much of the research (e.g., Johanson, 2001; Madigan, Linton, & Johnson, 1996) investigating affective factors in writing at university indicate that writing is one of the tasks that stimulate anxiety in students. Other research has been conducted in this regard and found that writers who were more anxious had a greater tendency to think and pause while writing than did less nervous writers (Hayes, 1981). Students with writing anxiety are not concerned about the structure of a paragraph or planning their essay and prefer to 'go with the flow' that they adopted at the start. For instance, anxiety while writing is considered by Hassan (2001) to be an important factor in the writing development of Egyptian EFL university students. It was found that writing apprehension had a significant influence on the writing skills of students. Less nervous students wrote better pieces compared to students with a high level of apprehension. In addition, students with low levels of apprehension possessed higher self-confidence

(Hassan, 2001). A study conducted by Al-Ahmad (2003) which analysed and attempted to solve the problem of writing anxiety that increased among both native and non-native learners of the English language examined 349 native speakers studying with 12 L1 writing teachers, as well as 77 ESL participants studying with three L2 writing teachers. Both groups were asked to complete the Daly and Miller Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) twice: once as a pre-test and once as a post-test. The findings of the study showed that the ESL/EFL learners faced more challenges in English writing that negatively affected their performance in the learning process compared with their native-English-speaking counterparts. A similar study was conducted by Latif (2007) to measure the impact of writing anxiety and writing self-efficacy among 67 Egyptian prospective of ESL students-teachers. The findings indicated that writing anxiety was identified among ESL learners while they were writing in English, which created high writing apprehension. The study also demonstrated that, as a result of English writing anxiety, low self-efficacy occurred among the participants. However, Erkan and Saban (2010) investigated 188 EFL students in Turkey in order to identify whether or not writing anxiety was associated with the performance of the students in English. Three instruments were utilized: the WAT, a self-efficacy in writing scale (SWS), and a questionnaire on attitudes towards writing (WAQ). The findings of the study indicated that the relationship between writing apprehension and English performance was negative.

In the Saudi context researchers focused more on speaking anxiety rather than writing anxiety, for example, Balla, (2017) investigated the level of foreign language anxiety in Saudi Classrooms experienced by female students in Prince Sattam University. The study is specifically about language anxiety and not about writing. The study revealed a high level of anxiety in language communication followed by test anxiety followed by students' awareness and fear of negative evaluation. Accordingly, Rafada and Madini, (2017) explored the main causes of English language speaking anxiety experienced by Saudi students. Their research sampled 126 Saudi students studying general English language courses in the foundation year. A mixed method was used to collect the data. The study revealed that there were several causes of speaking anxiety, and they were said to be (a) weak educational system at schools (b) test anxiety (c) lack of vocabulary (d) classroom atmosphere (e) peer anxiety and (f) EFL teachers. Javid, (2014) also looked at the causes of speaking anxiety not in writing anxiety using the Horwitz Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). However, Salebi (2004)

conducted a small study regarding EFL writing and indicated that 32 Saudi female college students reported anxiety as being the main reason for the basic errors they made when writing.

There is a strong correlation between writing anxiety and reading as mentioned by Lee, & Krashen (1997) who sent 318 questionnaires to first year high school students. The results revealed that some students were suffering from writing anxiety, but also indicated a strong correlation between writing anxiety and reading. Writing anxiety also has a strong relationship with students' concerns regarding negative evaluation and assessment. Johanson (2001) found that there was a negative correlation between writing anxiety and fear of receiving negative criticism from either teachers or peers. Fear of negative evaluation affected their writing potential in a negative way and they were also concerned about being judged for their limited writing proficiency, which may also cause writing anxiety. Similarly, fear of assessment and evaluation has a negative impact on the writing skills and writing processes of a student. Students become reserved and self-conscious about taking risks during the writing process owing to the fear of evaluation. This also affects their creativity, as they would prefer to adhere to the basic rules of writing rather than attempt anything innovative (Lee, 2001). It is concluded in a number of studies that the relationship between writing anxiety and self-assessment is much stronger than the relationship between students' accomplishment and writing apprehension (Cheng, 2002).

3.11.2.3 Lack of Motivation

Lack of motivation is another issue that has an impact on EFL students' writing. Motivation plays an essential role in the willingness and desire of individuals to do something (Broussard & Garrison, 2004). It is believed that motivation generates and stimulates human behaviour in a specific direction; thus, it represents a significant dimension in language learning (Bahous, Bacha, & Nabhani, 2011). Therefore, a low motivation level is not only detrimental for students, but also for teachers (Bacha, 2002). According to Zamel (1997), motivation plays a major role in enhancing and developing the academic writing of EFL students. Thus, taking into account that writing skills can be developed rapidly in EFL writing, students are more interested in writing when they are also encouraged to practise English writing on a daily basis and motivated to share what they write with the teacher and their classmates. These kinds of activity can, therefore, encourage or attract students to learning and acquiring writing

skills. Davies (1998) stated that if writing activities are interesting, learners will be motivated and encouraged to write. In addition, stimulating students' desire to write is very important and one of the main components of writing motivation. According to Leki (1991), the desire of students to write in order to communicate something is very important and it should be made interesting and attractive for students to write with some degree of motivation because it is much more difficult for students to write about something in which they have no knowledge or interest. Along the same lines, Silva (1997, in Thomsan, 2003) holds that giving students the freedom to choose their own topic is reasonable and motivating, and that they produce successful work as a result. Similarly, Thomsan et al. (2003) found that when EFL learners were allowed to make their own decisions as to the choice of topic about which to write, the quality of their writing was better.

In relation to the Arab context in general and the Saudi context in particular, Bahous et al. (2011) state that, because of a lack of motivation which leads to a lack of confidence, many Saudi students have a negative attitude towards learning English. Thus, focusing on encouraging university EFL students to write is one of the key points in the stimulation of their writing skills development at the university level. However, in the Saudi context, writing is not a priority and there is little encouragement for students to enhance their writing potential, focusing instead on fundamental academic abilities (Ankawi, 2015). However, at Taif University, which is the context of this study, EFL students are not given the opportunity to choose a topic in which they are interested; a topic is given to them to write about, whether the topic is interesting for them or not. Teachers simply follow the textbooks, whatever topic they contain suit students or not. Thus, the researcher believes that one of the problems with writing production is asking students to write about something they do not like or do not even have knowledge of and is not related to their environment and culture.

3.11.2.4 Lack of Self-confidence

Another important issue that influences the writing skills of EFL students is self-confidence. Many researchers indicate that a lack of confidence affects the ability of students to learn English (Fadda, 2012; Qobo & Soko, 2010; Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000). Along the same lines, Yiu (2009) considered that factors such as a low level of confidence decrease the students' level of motivation to learn English, also, leading to having no desire and ability to learn and understand English properly.

Previous literature has shown that the internal factors of learning English language such as self-confidence and a negative perception of or attitude towards English one of the main causes of students' lack of motivation (Simone, 2012). Also, there is a strong relationship with students' confidence in their writing ability and writing anxiety. Much research (e.g. Cava, 2000; Cheng, 2002; Pajares & Johnson, 1994) that has been carried out found that there was a negative relationship between students' opinion of their own writing ability and writing apprehension. For example, students who have a low level of confidence in their writing ability and unrealistic opinions of their writing competence have a higher level of anxiety (Cava, 2000; Cheng, 2002; Yan, 1999). MacIntyre et al. (1997) have indicated that students who underrate their writing abilities and have negative views of their writing may possibly be anxious. Such students tend not to address their weaknesses and anxiety, which directly affects their engagement and concentration (Aida, 1994; Scheier & Carver, 1992). Thus, Students who are not serious enough and committed in learning English language well, they will not confident enough to use English language. The encouragement of self confidence in learning a language through effective English teaching and English language exposure and practice which enhance EFL students to cope with difficulties of learning the language. Hellstén and Prescott (2004) suggest that Asian students' participation in classroom discussions is hindered greatly by the negative feelings of these students when speaking English due to their lack of confidence. Furthermore, poor confidence in academic writing not only affected on the quality of writing, but can also discourage students to engage in classroom discussions (Qobo & Soko, 2010).

In the Saudi context, English language teachers might have low confidence in teaching English language in general and writing in particular. This is due to that many of the English language teachers in Saudi Arabia are not native speakers of English. Thus, not surprisingly, EFL students in Saudi Arabia have poor confidence level in learning English language including the writing skill (Fadda, 2012), possibly because their teachers also lack confidence. In addition, Tyson (1997) highlighted that greater concentration on the content rather than on grammatical errors in the case of drafts, the 'publication' of students' writing work, and teachers' feedback all help in developing creative ideas and thus a better piece of writing. Thus, a sense of confidence is developed in writers when they are allowed to explore their creativity rather than focusing on principles of grammar. Students should be given more opportunities to

write in English regularly in the classroom and outside class about whatever topic they like to enhance motivation and self-confidence.

As mentioned above, the aforementioned psychological and linguistic factors are common issues influencing EFL students' academic writing performance and are frequently mentioned in studies in the field of writing education related to EFL learners. These issues might also influence EFL students' academic writing at Taif University in Saudi Arabia, which is the context of this study. There are also issues related to teaching teaching practice which also have an impact on students' academic writing that are mentioned in previous studies and might also affect the academic writing of EFL students in the Saudi context. These issues are discussed in the following section.

3.11.3 Teaching practices Issues

Many of the teaching practices for academic writing have proven to be very useful in teaching writing to students. Teaching students a wide range of writing methods and techniques encourages them to follow these strategies and write more. Even higher-level EFL students are considered to be reluctant writers if they have not been taught the necessary skills and strategies to know how to write and hence tend to remain unaware of them. These students may have an idea of a topic and have command over their content knowledge but, because of a lack of writing skills, are unable to combine these aspects and organize their thoughts in written form. Therefore, by providing students with appropriate and useful strategies, their writing skills can be enhanced and, to a great extent, the problem with composition will be alleviated. Teaching writing skills is not an easy task, which is why there are a number of approaches, techniques and strategies for teaching English writing. However, the use of inappropriate approaches, techniques and strategies in teaching English writing may cause difficulties for EFL students. Teachers should choose their teaching methods carefully and apply them appropriately; otherwise, the consequences for students learning to write and their writing development will be poor. Issues in academic writing related to EFL teaching practices include first, the use of inappropriate teaching methods which did not satisfy students' needs, fulfil departmental needs; second, a lack of English writing practice and third providing sufficient feedback on students' writing. These issues are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

3.11.3.1 Using inadequate methods for teaching writing

Using inadequate methods for teaching writing is one of the issues affecting the academic writing of EFL undergraduate students. In past decades, it has been debated whether writing should be taught and, if so, which of the writing techniques and methods would be most useful (Reid, 2002). Seow (2002) created a list of steps that teachers could follow to apply the process approach to teaching writing, which included planning, drafting, responding, revising, editing, evaluating, and post-writing. Moreover, Ferris and Reppen (2002) stated that the process method can be used in a genre-based approach to content writing instruction and teaching students to self-edit.

On the other hand, consideration of the perceptions of students regarding writing plays a crucial role in the process of teaching writing. Thus, using the necessary strategies for producing appropriately composed writing is one of the difficulties that EFL undergraduate students face. Choosing and using appropriate writing strategies are essential steps towards producing pieces of writing which are readable and communicative in nature. Therefore, the appropriate methods and strategies of teaching EFL writing need to be used in order to enable EFL students to succeed in creating effective texts. Lee, & Lee, (2013) conducted a case study of Korean ESL students' perceptions and explored the effects of an L2 writing instructional model for blended learning in higher education. The participants included both undergraduate and graduate male and female students. The study revealed that this instructional model for second language writing was more effective than the traditional method of teaching academic writing. Al-Mehwari (2005) stated that the most significant issues encountered by both students and teachers in the teaching of English to undergraduate students at university were found to be teaching methods, course content, and assessment methods. In the same regard, Al-Refa'ai (2001) found that teaching methods, the courses used, teaching materials, and the methods of assessment utilized by instructors were major factors affecting students' accomplishment of the English language. Moreover, In a Malaysian context, Giridharan, (2011) identified gaps in the academic writing ability of ESL students in order to know the effects on their overall academic performance. In his study a qualitative pragmatic case study was used and explored academic writing challenges faced by students. More specifically, he focused on evaluating academic essay drafts of EFL students and giving feedback forms to the students. His recommendation was that several methods of teaching academic writing needed to be used to develop academic writing for ESL students such as new strategies that teach students how to plan,

organise, draft and edit their work. Similarly, Abbad (1988) suggested that students' difficulties are due to the use of inadequate approach strategies for language teaching and a learning environment that might be uncomfortable and inappropriate for learning a foreign language. It is more effective for EFL undergraduate students to learn and practice the process of writing in order to be able to produce better writing.

In contrast, El Abed (1991) found no remarkable differences in either the quality or quantity of writing production between students who composed using pre-writing exercises and the students who did not. However, it is evident that undertaking such exercises can result in better writing. For example, Zhang and Vukelich (1998) stated that EFL students who composed using pre-writing exercises performed better than students who did not use them. Similarly, Pishghadam and Ghanizadeh (2006) investigated the effect of mapping as a pre-writing activity on Iranian EFL students' composition ability. The findings showed that mapping activity improved the students' writing ability and those EFL students who carried out pre-writing activities proved to be better at L2 writing. Sasaki (2000) claimed that specialist writers always recommended pre-writing activities and also argued that expert writers do not stop and think as often as possible, as learners do. English instructors should consider new methods of teaching English writing and benefit from the findings of new research conducted on difficulties in writing in English, which recommend using updated approaches to teaching writing rather than the more traditional methods which many teachers still use. Lee (2003) showed that students who were overwhelmed by writing were often the victims of inadequate instruction from teachers of English writing skills who pursued traditional methods of teaching writing. Effective writing methods ought to start with a thinking writing process that encourages students to plan, prefigure, and brainstorm for initial thoughts. This process is significantly more important for EFL students who face the overwhelming task of expressing complex thoughts in another literacy system (Lee, 2003).

Numerous studies carried out in Arabic countries relating to EFL academic writing have revealed that teaching methods and teachers' practices in academic writing have an impact on EFL students' writing. Al-Sawalha and Chow (2012) mentioned that Jordanian EFL students could become acquainted with different approaches to writing that would hopefully encourage them to write in English, rather than discouraging and frustrating them from continuing to learn to write in English. For example, the first

component of the writing process is pre-writing activities which prepare students to write and enhance the students' generation of ideas. The process of drafting similarly helps them focus on the improvement of their thoughts and of expressing themselves. Such writing activities enable students to acquire the necessary cognitive skills and hence become successful writers. This idea is consistent with Victori's (1999) recommendations that EFL learners should be taught writing strategies, such as planning and organizing ideas, as well as evaluation in order to compose successfully and effectively. In this way, if the Jordanian students referred to above were engaged with such activities in a local context, they would be better able to learn to write.

However, in many parts of the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, English is taught through traditional teacher-centred, book-centred, grammar-translation methods and emphasis is placed strongly on rote learning (Bacha, 2010). As a consequence of this traditional approach, students depend on the teachers in the learning process as the source of knowledge; they think that knowledge is gained from teachers and not by themselves and thus do not bother to explore and discover the knowledge they need for themselves. In addition, what makes learning a foreign language more complicated is that many EFL students prefer simply to listen rather than participate and be involved and active in the learning process. This may be because this is what they are used to do or because they are afraid to practice the language and make mistakes, thus avoiding any potential embarrassment in front of their teachers and classmates. Furthermore, Alkubaidi (2014) stated that little attention was devoted to teaching the process of writing in order to learn different writing genres and the discourse required for a given purpose; rather, the focus is on grammar, language structure, spelling, and composing mechanics in general. Teachers use traditional methods; thus, students are usually given set paragraphs to memorize and reproduce without understanding the entire meaning and the correct application of those sentences and without any explanation of the way in which the sentences are formed. They pass the examination and obtain high grades by memorizing all the questions in the textbook with the ideal answers. Teaching methods play a crucial role in learning writing skill whether for undergraduate or postgraduate students. Al-Khasawneh, (2010) investigated the academic writing problems of Arab postgraduate students at the College of Business in Malaysia. He used qualitative face to face interviews involving 10 Arab postgraduate students as his sample. The participants were 5 Jordanians, 2 Iraqis, 2 Libyans, and 1 Yemeni. His findings revealed inappropriate teaching methods and a poor teaching

environment as the main causes of writing weaknesses. Moreover, Zafer (2002) surveyed the English language teachers of intermediate and secondary-levels in Saudi Arabia at Al-Qassim region regarding the teaching methods they used, finding that the methods most favoured by English instructors were the audio-lingual method, followed by the grammar-translation method. As indicated by Fareh (2010), English instructors talked through most of the lesson, explaining what the lesson was about and how to address it and students rarely spoke or asked questions, even if they did not understand. Similarly, Alkubaidi (2014) concluded that classes are normally quiet, since the students take a passive role in the learning process. In addition, ur Rahman, & Alhaisoni, (2012) pointed out that in comparison with many countries in which English is taught as a second or foreign language, the teaching methodology used by Saudi Arabian English teachers is not appropriate for learning English as a foreign language, and specifically for learning academic writing. They claim that composing methodologies that enhance good academic writing are not utilized in the Saudi syllabus. Supporting this, Younes, & Arabia (2016) revealed that the English language courses focused on teaching general English, improving communication skills only and not preparing students for academic studies. This was replaced by ESP (English for specific purposes) courses for the preparatory year (foundation year) and the study strongly recommended that the courses and syllabus in the PYP (pre- year preparatory) (foundation year) should focus on teaching ESP to the students at Tabuk University. The insistence on using traditional methods for teaching English in Saudi Arabia is partly attributed to the local curricula design and development. In addition, the outdated style of the teaching methods used in Saudi Arabia leads to many teaching limitations, such as on topics for discussion, group discussions and limitations of using a wide variety of online resources for most Arab students (Fadda, 2012).

3.11.3.2 Lack of Practice

Another issue that has an impact on students' academic writing is lack of practice. According to Grabe and Kaplan (1996) writing skill is not acquired naturally, but requires intensive learning and constant practice to develop. They also hold that the ideal approach to improving ability in writing is to practise it. Moreover, Hedge (1988) stated that, based on his experience, to become good writers, students should do a great deal of writing. This is supported by Chokwe, (2011) who conducted research exploring perceptions and experiences of first year university students and teachers of academic writing in South Africa. Chokwe used a qualitative research methodology conducting

focus group interviews and questionnaires to 48 students from different faculties and English teachers participated. The study revealed that ESL students faced many problems in academic writing and needed intensive writing instruction, including considerable practice. Similarly, Adas and Bakir (2013) stated that international students face difficulties in generating and expressing their thoughts successfully when they are writing in an academic way and that one of the reasons for this was lack of practice in their writing skills. Thus, written work is essentially a creative process and good writers should learn how to convey their ideas clearly for all kinds of audiences which takes a great deal of practice (Davies, 1998). This is consistent with Hawkins (2005) who found that development in English can occur in three ways, one of which is having the opportunity to practise.

In Arabic and Saudi contexts, Gelb (2012) stated that Arab students prefer to listen and talk rather than read and write, which could be beneficial in discussing academic issues with classmates; however, it does not help them to write assignments successfully or to pass written examinations and obtain a degree. This is consistent with Huwari and Al-Khasawneh (2013) who maintained that university students in Arab countries in general and in Saudi Arabia in particular seldom practise writing in English in their free time outside the classroom. They conducted a study on the reasons for the weakness in writing of the foundation year Saudi students at Taibah University and found that insufficient practice was one of the main causes. Most of the students mentioned that they did not practise writing outside the classroom, even for homework. In the same vein, Al-Badwawi, (2011) conducted a study about the perceptions and practices of first year students' academic writing at the Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman. Al-Badwawi, utilised a qualitative research design using seven focus group interviews which were conducted with students and fifteen interviews were conducted with teachers in the English Language Department, and he utilised some document analysis. His study found that insufficient writing practice was one of the main reasons for the students' weakness. Similarly, Jafari, & Ansari (2012) concurred with these findings, stating that Arab students lack the basic knowledge of English writing in spite of the fact that they are taught English in school. Furthermore, students in Saudi Arabia do not practise English writing enough, either inside or outside the classroom, because the grammar rules on which the teachers focus are not used by the students in actual writing; hence, Saudi students require a great deal of practice in writing (Alhaysony, 2012). This is consistent with, Lee and Lee (2013) who stated that one way to overcome

the effects of lack of practice on second language learning in higher education is to expose the students to a number of opportunities to write and practice of various forms of writing and instructions intensively. However, many L2 learners have a limited number of class sessions and insufficient time in a conventional classroom while they are writing and revising their writing, which is a serious problem that hinders them from completing the process of writing properly to produce better work. Thus, students should be given adequate writing opportunities and suitable environments should be created in which to interact and communicate with peers and a teacher regardless of time or place.

3.11.3.3 Teacher Feedback

Teacher feedback is also considered one of the issues that influences the academic writing of EFL undergraduate students. Students tend to work more carefully and with more interest when they know that their work will be checked by the teacher. They have less interest when they know that the teacher is not greatly concerned with checking their work and providing them with feedback. It is important to give students regular feedback in order for their writing skills to develop instead of providing them with a general response. Teachers' feedback is considered an important method in improving students writing which encourages students to revise their work (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). In the same line, Razali, (2014) conducted a mixed method study which explored the impact of teacher written feedback on undergraduate student revisions on ESL students' writing at Universiti Malaysia Perlis. The study revealed that the written feedback of the teachers enhanced students' revisions and accepted the teachers' feedback positively. Moreover, Silver and Lee, (2007) stated that teachers' feedback has a crucial role in writing skills which familiarised students with their strengths and weaknesses. As a result of the teachers' feedback they were enabled to overcome the points of weakness and benefit from the points of strength in their writing.

However, Brookhart, (2008) stated that one of the reasons for the inadequate feedback by teachers is that it can be frustrating to give feedback on a final draft. However, teachers can use what is called 'feed-forward', which encourages students by engaging them in the feedback process by creating feedback activities to correct the mistakes in the final draft, as well as asking the teachers for more explanation regarding their feedback on that draft. Other problems pertaining to written feedback are whether students will respond afterwards and whether they understand it fully. To improve the

writing skills of EFL students and to correct their mistakes many English writing teachers, according to Ferris and Hedgcock (2005), implemented a one-to-one strategy in feedback. Furthermore, to assess the potential of students and to improve the writing of ESL students, numerous studies have been conducted to implement such methods. Students' writing can also be improved by encouraging them through positive feedback (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). Moreover, students can be presented as both receivers and givers by revealing their perceptions of the development of their writing skills courses towards the fulfilment of their goals and objectives, particularly when the teacher and the student have a comparable educational or cultural background.

According to Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990), feedback can be confusing. However, the majority of students respond to feedback while revising their assignments (Ferris, 2013). Lee (2007) attempted to explore how the relationship between students and teachers and the connection between them affected the ways a teacher comments on a student's writing and how the students responded to teachers' comments. The research showed that there are four basic ways in which a teacher can facilitate feedback: written commentary, peer feedback, conference and online feedback. Hence, it is the responsibility of the teacher to opt for the best approach for achieving the optimum combination of the options available. It should be noted that the majority of the teachers in Lee's (2007) study believed that the absence of feedback increased the unwillingness of students to write; in contrast, the students expressed the opposite opinion.

3.11.3.4 Peer Feedback

Another issue that has an impact on students' academic writing is peer feedback. Ferris (2003) stated that feedback is very important and effective in improving and developing students' writing. Many studies that have been conducted to investigate the impact of feedback have shown that feedback leads to students' greater command of language. For example, Storch and Tapper (2007) showed in their study that verbal complexity and grammar were greatly improved after only one semester. The need for focused research on peer feedback among EFL/ESL students has occupied a number of researchers. Al-Hazmi (2007) revealed that Arab ESL students relying on peer feedback were more concerned with superficial text revisions, while self-assessors focused on developing the content of their compositions. Conversely, Levine (2002) found similarities and differences in the revision behaviour of Israeli and American students, as well as variations in their attitudes toward peer response and the authority of the

teacher. In addition to the changing aspects in the peer response sessions, some notable differences in the quantity and quality of responses between the two groups were observed. With regard to the teacher's authoritative role and the attitude towards peer response, some variation was reported between the two groups. Similarly, Yang (2006) investigated whether this issue could be addressed by providing a resource from peer feedback and observed two groups of students at a Chinese university participating in essay writing on the same topic: one group receiving feedback from their peers and the other from their teacher. Moreover, due to the observance of significant imperfections in the writing approaches, the feedback of the teacher was more likely to be employed, which led to greater improvements in the writing. On the other hand, peer feedback was correlated with a greater degree of student sovereignty; peer feedback also has a role, even in cultures that are said to give notable power and authority to the teacher as in the Saudi context.

There are different methods for giving students feedback that have been investigated to determine which is most effective. For example, the influence of students' error correction in assignments on error reduction was investigated by Chandler (2003), who observed the effectiveness of different methods and which correction and error feedback techniques were most applicable. According to the findings, subsequent errors were reduced by error correction in assignments without affecting quality or fluency. Moreover, compared to defining the type of error, basic errors and direct correction were recommended as being more applicable than affective feedback methods. Further, written dialogue between a teacher and her learners was investigated by Perpignan (2003). This written dialogue contained the written feedback of the teacher, the learners' written text, and the continuing responses developed from the initial exchange. It was revealed that an understanding of the feedback dialogue could best be reached between the participants in a learning-teaching situation. In addition, with regard to the methods and types of feedback utilized by EFL teachers in the English writing of Saudi EFL students, Asiri (1997) discovered that teachers' written feedback on the English writing of Saudi EFL students mainly focused on superficial problems, such as grammar and vocabulary, paying little or no attention to other important features, such as content and organization. Similarly, Abbuhl (2005) compared two groups of students, one receiving semester-long instruction while the other received only one set of written comments, and found that extra feedback and instruction resulted in greater improvement in organization, argumentation and language accuracy.

Finally, there are also contextual issues that might influence EFL writing performance based on learners' cultural and academic learning environments. These contextual issues are discussed in the following section.

3.11.4 Contextual issues facing EFL students in academic writing

In addition to the aforementioned issues, the nature of EFL students' contexts and their features has an important impact on the learners' learning process and performance in learning skills in general and writing skills in particular. These involve such contextual issues as, for example, teaching of large classes (class size), course facilities and insufficient time allocated for writing class sessions. These issues have been identified as having an impact on students' writing, leading them to struggle to produce a piece of writing (Chakraverty, & Gautum, 2000; Blatchford, 2011; Almulla, 2015).

3.11.4.1 Insufficient time of writing class session

Insufficient time given to a writing class session is one of the issues that influence EFL students' academic writing. The length of time of a class session should be taken into consideration in teaching writing skills, as, for writing activities, students need enough time to be able to go through various writing stages, such as gathering ideas, organizing these ideas, writing drafts, proofreading and re-writing (Hedge, 1988). Similarly, Kroll (1990) observed that writing consists of different "structural levels", and that each of these levels needs time and facilitation to achieve. The basic levels are text structure, paragraph structure, sentence structure, word structure and other stages that need time to accomplish. Coordinating all these writing requirements is a difficult task and adequate time is required; thus, the amount of time allocated to produce a piece of writing may influence the extent of the achievement of the above-mentioned structural levels of any piece of writing. In line with this, White and Arndt (1991, in Italo, 1999) stated that time is expected to be used to think, organize, shape and then generate ideas. Of all the language skills, writing is the most time-consuming and the one which benefits most from time spent on it. In the process approach to teaching writing, more time is permitted for students because the quality of students' written work can be affected by the amount of time given to learning and practising. In addition, time is essential in learning writing skills; hence, to be able to think deeply about a specific topic and express your thoughts in written form requires sufficient time (Chakraverty, & Gautum, 2000). Similarly, many students and teachers feel that it is not an easy task to produce written text under time pressure. This is an unnatural atmosphere and is not conducive

to students creating a good piece of writing which truly represents their writing capacities (Kroll, 1990). In addition, time is a key factor in producing an organized and coherent piece of writing (Raimes, 1983).

3.11.4.2 Class size: Teaching Large Classes

Teaching large classes is another issue that affects the academic writing of EFL undergraduate students. In a context in which the grammar-translation method of language teaching prevails, it is not unusual to have classes of 30 or 60 students, or even more. Such class sizes create a number of problems for writing teachers, such as finding sufficient time to concentrate on all the students, letting them all practise writing exercises and correcting these pieces of work, as well as giving useful feedback on multiple drafts of texts. These activities cannot be easily achieved and may not even be possible for large numbers of students in a short period of time. Indeed, teaching a large class presents a number of issues for both teachers and students. Blatchford (2007) identified three such issues first, class management, as it is difficult to manage a large class in a large classroom. Second, the educator-student relationship is affected adversely, particularly for students who feel shy in asking questions in the class about what they were unable to understand. Third, teachers have time management problems in terms of marking, planning, and assessment in large classes, as it is no easy task to find time to supervise and evaluate large number of students. Additionally, Blatchford, (2011) conducted another study which examined the effect of class size on classroom engagement and teacher-pupil interaction. The study had examined the impact of class size on the achievement levels of primary school students and secondary school students. It used systematic observation methods on 686 students in 49 schools. The results of the study revealed that small class size prevents students from distraction in class; they pay more attention and also receive more attention from the teacher and create more interaction between them. This in turn increased the students' achievement while large classes decreased the classroom engagement as well as the students' achievement. In the same line, Ballantyne, (2000) mentioned that teachers feel that it is difficult to motivate students and engage their interest in large classes. Moreover, Bourke (1986) stated that large classrooms involve issues such as noise, non-academic management and teachers' lecturing or explanations. Finally, feeling anonymous and interpersonally removed from the teacher can be damaging to students struggling with course material (Isbell & Cote, 2009). In order to avoid many of these issues, it is recommended that class sizes should be sufficiently reasonable for the teacher to be able

to manage to facilitate students' learning and successful graduation. Roettger (2007) suggested that effective teachers' workshops should be established to train teachers in being able to manage large classrooms.

This issue is very prevalent in Arabic and Saudi contexts. For example, the issue of large classes is one encountered in the Egyptian education system at both the college and university levels. As part of the issue of over-population in Egypt, class numbers at pre-university levels range from 60-80, depending on the area (Ahmed, 2010). As a result, delivering lectures is considered the main teaching method and the most common form of communication used in universities; hence, teaching in large classes affects teachers' choice of teaching method (McGarr, 2009). Similarly, Bahanshal, (2013) conducted a study in Saudi Arabia investigating the effect of class size on teaching and learning English as a foreign language. A Qualitative study carried out in two public secondary schools interviewed six Saudi English teachers about their perceptions of large classes. The results of the study showed that large classes impacted on students' outcomes, and that there were difficulties in teaching large numbers of students in one class. Another study conducted by Almulla, (2015) looked at the effects of class size on teaching in primary school in Saudi Arabia. The study investigated teachers' perceptions of teaching in Years 4, 5 and 6 regarding class size. The study used 30 teachers as a sample. A quantitative survey was distributed asking the teachers whether class size can impact on teachers' beliefs, attitudes and teaching methods. The results revealed that large classes influenced their teaching and limited the use of a variety of teaching methods. The majority of the teachers said that they prefer to teach in small classes containing 15 to 20 students.

Specifically, with regard to the context of this study (Saudi EFL students at Taif University), some of these above mentioned issues, if not all, might be encountered by Saudi EFL students in their writing, hindering them from learning and mastering academic writing skills, while others might not. In addition, new embedded academic writing issues could arise specifically related to EFL students in the Saudi context, which have not been revealed in previous literature. Thus, these issues need to be investigated and addressed in order to raise the awareness of teachers, EFL departments, education policy makers and those in similar contexts, whether other universities in Saudi Arabia, in universities with similar contexts in other Arabic countries or, indeed, worldwide. Therefore, this study is an attempt to explore the issues facing Saudi EFL undergraduate students in academic writing, as well as whether there may be hidden or

embedded issues that students encounter in academic writing only in this particular context which have not previously been mentioned in the literature. Therefore, this is original research and contributes to knowledge by highlighting the main issues affecting EFL students' writing performance and enriching the field of second language writing education development. This research also makes a practical contribution in that it can assist in developing the writing education in Taif University in Saudi Arabia and perhaps in other contexts in which EFL is taught.

3.12 Summary

This chapter was divided into nine sections. The first section briefly reviewed schools of thought from the past to date, including the main theories of writing, which are Contrastive Rhetoric Theory, Cognitive Development Theory, Communication Theory and Social Constructionism as a theoretical background to writing English as a second language. The presentation of theories in the first section paved the way for a discussion in the next section of the development of the main approaches to teaching writing in ESL / EFL which evolved from the aforementioned theories. The second section reviewed the well-known approaches to teaching writing, as presented in the relevant literature. The third section was about three commonly used writing approaches which are the product approach, process approach and genre approach. They were briefly discussed in chronological order of their publication. The fourth section was about the English writing approaches used in Saudi Arabia and Taif University. The fifth section gave an overview of the nature of writing in general and English writing in particular. The sixth section was about definitions of academic writing of English as a foreign language (EFL). English and Arabic language differences and difficulties in writing and the importance of academic writing in HE education were presented in the seventh section. The eighth section was about English writing textbooks used in Saudi Arabia and Taif University context. Finally, the most common issues in academic writing encountered by EFL students in general and Arab EFL students in particular were reviewed, identified and discussed. The next chapter presents the methodology used in this study.

4 CHAPTER FOUR: The Methodology - Philosophical Basis

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter elaborated the issues faced by English language learners in English academic writing, and also illustrated the themes explored in previous studies as academic writing issues facing EFL students in different contexts. In this chapter the methodology and research design are outlined. The chapter consists of four sections. The first section outlines the purposes of the study. The second section gives a general methodological overview. The third and fourth sections include the key elements of the research process. In this study, a pragmatic mixed methods framework will be discussed with justifications for using this. Then, the specific methodological and research design of this study, which is a Sequential Exploratory Design which was adapted to meet the needs of this research, is elaborated with a rationale for using this mixed methods design including timing and weighting. Then, both qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures are elaborated in detail in the 'research in practice' section including, the research site, methods and the process of collecting the data. Finally, the sampling, piloting, validity, reliability, positionality and ethical considerations are illustrated in separate sections.

4.2 Purpose and Question of the Study

The overall purposes of this study are to explore issues facing Saudi EFL students in academic writing based on their own experiences and voices and to identify the main factors in understanding those issues facing Saudi EFL students in academic writing at Taif University. These might relate to the curricula, teaching methods and teacher practices, learners' study skills, the academic and environmental context, or any other embedded factors related to Saudi EFL students in particular. There may be hidden or embedded issues that Saudi EFL students encounter in academic writing only in this particular context. These may not have previously been mentioned in the literature covering all aspects of education, as the problems that students face could come from more than one aspect of the educational process. In other words, the causes of issues that face Saudi EFL students with academic writing might come from the curricula, rather than the teaching methods, or might come from both of them.

The main research question is:

What are the issues encountered by Saudi EFL students in academic writing at Taif University?

This is addressed through several sub – questions, as follows:

- A. How is teaching English as a foreign language conducted in Saudi Arabia, particularly the writing component?
- B. What are the special characteristics of the Saudi Higher Education context for academic writing in English as a foreign language?
- C. What are the issues identified in the literature facing EFL students in academic writing?
- D. What is the most appropriate way to research issues facing EFL students in English academic writing?
- E. What are the issues facing Saudi EFL students in academic writing at Taif University?
- F. Are there any significant differences in the influence of the different issues on three academic year groups of students in academic writing?

4.3 Methodological Overview

Educational research can be conducted using three main methods or approaches which are qualitative methods, quantitative methods, and mixed methods (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2017; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Within quantitative research, the epistemological view considers the world to be external, real and hard (Cohen et al 2018). This leads to an assumption that quantitative data allow an understanding of a research problem's causes and results (Bryman, 2012).

On the other hand, the qualitative approach considers the social world to be humanly created, personal and softer (Cohen et al., 2018). In this approach, group discussions, observations of participants, interviews and Focus Groups are the methods used where the participants are selected from non-random samples. Qualitative research extracts and explores information based on specific population groups. Since a small sample is assessed, its results cannot be generalised (Huysamen, 1997; Cohen et al. 2018; Bryman, 2012).

Each approach has its strength and limitations. For example, the strength associated with quantitative methods is that reliable and quantifiable data are collected where the results can be generalised or applied over a large population. The quantitative methods deliver descriptive statistics, which then help to create general trends, tabulation of data and graphic data presentation (Coldeway, 1989). The phenomenon may also be analysed using statistics as part of the quantitative methods. Each variable's strength is determined using frequency distribution tables and bar graphs. However, there are some weaknesses which must be considered. Using questionnaires only, as part of the quantitative methods, could limit in depth comprehensive information and closer explanation related to complex topics (Huysamen, 1997; Cohen et al. 2018; Bryman, 2012). For quantitative methods, one of the weaknesses is that they do not always consider the explanations of the word "why" of the research topic.

In contrast, one of the main strengths of qualitative methods is that a researcher would be able to present in depth a comprehensive and rich data analysis based on the information provided by the participants, including addressing "why" a phenomenon occurred. A social phenomenon as it occurs in a natural setting is investigated and described by qualitative researchers through observing, interviewing or interacting with the participants of the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). However, qualitative research is also subject to some weaknesses. This research method can result in bias since the researcher's personal interpretations are included. Also, the findings of qualitative research are normally considered not to be generalisable due to small samples, and a lack of representativeness (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

The third methodological approach is a mixed method which combines both qualitative and quantitative methods together in an integrated manner. Thus, the strengths of both methods, qualitative and quantitative, overcome their weaknesses when used together as mixed methods, which can enable the research to provide deeper insights (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Pragmatism commonly employs both the qualitative and quantitative researches in a single research, since, pragmatists favour utilising whatever methods and tools work best to answer the research question. Pragmatism and its mixed methods approaches will be elaborated in detail in the following sections.

4.4 Pragmatism

Pragmatism is suitable for this research and the researcher adopted a pragmatic research approach in order to answer the research questions of this study. Creswell and Plano Clark, (2017) illustrated that pragmatism sets aside the epistemological and ontological debate about the perceptions of the real social world and focuses on what works best to answer the research questions, without asking about reality and the laws of nature. This gives the researcher the freedom to choose from among many possible approaches for the sake of answering the research questions properly. Thus, the research questions are answered by pragmatic researchers by making use of values as part of the strategies in a unique and complementary manner. Methodological pragmatism includes pluralistic assumptions, where the research and operational designs are based entirely upon what works best for the questions that are to be answered (Creswell & Plano Clark 2017). It is claimed that the classical philosophical pragmatists, like John Dewey, Charles Sanders Pierce and William James managed to face and think beyond the dualism which is present among the methodological purists (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004). Through this ability, pragmatic research proves to be dynamic and innovative, as well as being flexible and adaptable so as to manage situations that emerge along the way.

However, mixed methods are not without their critics and there are several disadvantages related to mixed methods. Some methodological purists believe that it is philosophically incoherent to mix various data types as well as methods (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004). The aspect has been supported in the literature on mixed methods, where it is acknowledged that several inconsistencies and disagreements are present concerning the validity of the mixed methods research (Tashakkori & Creswell 2007). Also, Teddlie and Tashakkori, (2009) claimed that such aspects may not be surprising since the literature on mixed methods within social science does not present the best approach. In defence of mixed methods as a distinctive approach to research, the mixed method is considered a distinct research approach, but this methodological tradition is relatively in its infancy (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009). Although a mixed methods approach is still in its developing stages, its use is rapidly increasing in social sciences, humanities, and health and management sciences (Creswell 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark 2011; Tashakkori & Creswell 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori 2012). Many scholars from sociology, psychology, economics, health, media, and other fields (for example, Woolley 2009; Castro et al. 2010; Bazeley 2012; Plano Clark 2010; Goodwin et al. 2013; Molina-Azorin 2012) have utilised mixed methods in their research to investigate

a variety of different social issues, because of its effectiveness in obtaining accurate and precise results in any inquiry by using the appropriate combination of methods. The popularity of mixed methods research is not as a new dominant methodology or a replacement for qualitative or quantitative methods, but due to a concern to employ the strengths of these approaches while carefully minimizing their weaknesses as much as possible (Creswell & Plano Clark 2017; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson 2006).

The researcher of this study adopted a pragmatic methodological framework for more than one reason. Firstly, utilising a single methodology, either qualitative or quantitative is not sufficient to answer the research question of this study. For example, if the researcher used qualitative methodology only to explore academic writing issues in that Saudi context, specifically through interviews based on the students' voices and experiences, it would partly and in some way answer the research questions. However, the results of the study would not be generalisable because of the small size of the sample, which would make it difficult for the researcher to obtain findings that represented the whole context of the study. In contrast, if the researcher used only a quantitative methodology, such as a questionnaire only, in depth understanding and information related to complicated problems might not be obtained. Thus, the researcher decided to utilise mixed methodology. This enabled the generation of rich results regarding issues Saudi EFL students are actually facing in academic writing and also, allowed for possible generalisation of the research findings, by confirming whether or not the results of the qualitative findings could be supported through the quantitative results. By using the strengths of both methods, the researcher was able to achieve the purpose of the study addressing and answering the research question properly. In the next section, mixed method approaches will be elaborated in more detail.

4.5 Mixed Methods Approach: Definitions and Justifications

There is a growing shift and support from the purists of the traditional paradigms of considering using Mixed Method Research (MMR) (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The fundamental main objective of researchers in mixed methods research is to collect multiple levels of data based on various methods, approaches and strategies in a single study. Such research would present a mixture of results that would be much more comprehensive than the results of data from a single method being applied.

Mixed method research has been defined as a model of inquiry which has a philosophy based on the qualitative and quantitative research models allowing the results to provide comprehensive knowledge and increase the validity of the meanings which would not be possible by applying a single model (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Moreover, with the help of mixed methods it is possible to attain the most appropriate results that work best to answer the research question. Mixed methods allow researchers to utilise the most appropriate inquiry model for answering the research questions (Morgan, 2007). There are some research questions which would be answered better using qualitative analysis and some would need quantitative methods. However, the pragmatic philosophy of mixed methods allows the researcher to apply the appropriate aspects of both methods to be able to address the research objectives and answer the research questions properly. Specifically, as Creswell and Plano-Clark (2017) suggest, a problem arises if the quantitative results are unable to present in depth explanations of results and there is a need for the qualitative data to enhance the explanation of the quantitative research from participant perspectives.

Mixed method research can be applied for various reasons, even if such a combination has been rejected by traditional methodologists. Howe, (1988) claimed that various kinds of data and their analysis methods may not be compatible which is why they should not be applied together within a single research study. Nevertheless, the application of mixed methods is not a new concept and it has been employed for some time. There are various research questions present in history regarding the different types of data although these research studies were not identified as mixed methods research (Olsen 2004). In recent times, however, various data types are being combined in an intentional and explicit manner. The techniques are also being combined as part of a methodological approach which complements the single method approach usually applied in research (Creswell & Plano Clark 2017).

As part of the mixed method research, within a single research study or a series, the qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis are combined. The central objective is to combine the quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide better understanding and rich data of the problem to be analysed, rather than one approach alone (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2017). With mixed methods research, it is possible to collect data in both numbers and words (Caracelli & Greene, 1993). One of the most essential advantages of the mixed method research is that the problems associated with

the conventional research methods can be avoided (Creswell & Plano Clark 2017). Mixed methods are more comprehensive, and provide a complete picture by presenting generalised in depth knowledge through participants. Quantitative data help generalize the results and qualitative data represent the voices of the individuals (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

In regard to the present research study, which is concerned with academic writing issues in a specific context, the most appropriate way to address the empirical research questions is through mixed methods, to enable the researcher to explore the embedded issues of academic writing facing the EFL students in the Saudi context through qualitative study and then use the quantitative study to confirm and then generalise the qualitative findings. By doing so, the researcher will be able to find out the common issues facing students in academic writing in a specific context which is the Saudi EFL students at Taif University.

Given the choice of a mixed methods approach, the question arises as to how best to combine qualitative and quantitative aspects in a particular study. There are six primary mixed methods designs namely: three sequential (explanatory, exploratory, and transformative) designs and three parallel or concurrent (triangulation, embedded, and transformative) designs. Creswell, (2017) presented and identified the six mixed methods designs in more detail:

- 1. Sequential Explanatory design:** There are two phases in this model. In the first phase, the quantitative data is collected and analysed. In the second phase, the qualitative data is collected and analysed.
- 2. Sequential Exploratory design:** This includes two phases. In the first phase, the qualitative data is collected and analysed. In the second phase, the quantitative data is collected and analysed.
- 3. Sequential Transformative design:** includes two phases where, either the qualitative or quantitative model could be implemented first. This is then followed by the analysis procedures of either qualitative or quantitative data collection. In this strategy, the different element is that a theoretical perspective is present which provides guidance to the researcher.

4. **Concurrent Triangulation design:** Quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently in this model. The data set is analysed based on the interactions.
5. **Concurrent Embedded design** is similar to the concurrent triangulation strategy. In the embedded design, one data set is nested or embedded within the research. The study is guided by a primary research study and a supportive secondary method is present.
6. **Concurrent Transformative design**, maintains a theoretical perspective where data is collected in a concurrent manner. An embedded strategy may be present within the model.

The selection of any of the above mixed methods research designs depends on the application of the precise theoretical framework and the implementation of the design, either sequential or concurrent, would determine the data collection processes. The design is also based on whether priority is given to quantitative or qualitative or both kinds of data, which may be equal or unequal in their weight. The stages of analysis and integration of data within the research study, whether connected, transformed or separated co-exist along with the procedural notations for illustrating each design (Creswell et al. 2009).

Hence, after considering the previous research study reviews, (Creswell 2003; Creswell et al. 2017; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie 2010) where qualitative and quantitative research studies have their own strengths and weaknesses, the researcher adopted an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach design to address the research questions of this study in order to be able specifically to explore issues encountered by Saudi EFL students in academic writing. It can be stated that the exploratory sequential mixed methods approach is most suitable for this study as the researcher would be able to answer the research questions appropriately by collecting, analysing and mixing the qualitative and quantitative data. Through the combination of the two methods, it would be possible to access the strengths of both methods and overcome their weaknesses. A deep understanding of the research study is attained when the mixed research method is applied (Creswell & Plano- Clark, 2017). For the

purpose of this research, mixed methods research is valuable since the research questions cannot be answered by applying a single data type (Morell & Tan, 2009). It is necessary to utilise mixed methods in this study because a single data collection method could not provide the variety of data necessary to address the research questions (Morell & Tan, 2009). In addition, this study includes collecting and analysing two kinds of data qualitative and quantitative sequentially. Thus, exploratory sequential mixed methods design is the appropriate and suitable approach for this study and is needed to address the research questions. In the following section, the sequential exploratory mixed method framework design will be elaborated in more detail.

4.6 The Study Design: Sequential Exploratory Mixed Method

In the present research, the sequential exploratory instruments mixed methods design will be utilised as presented by Creswell and Plano-Clark (2017) where the Phase I qualitative data results are used initially to develop instruments as a quantitative survey for the quantitative data collection in phase II. Then the results of the two phases provide the overall research study interpretations in Phase III. The three phases of sequential exploratory instruments mixed methods design are usually used (when a researcher intended to develop new instrument between the phases), where a researcher begins exploring a topic qualitatively, in order to follow up with the building of a new instrument for a quantitative phase in order to generalise the findings of the study to a larger sample (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

(QUAL □ Instrument Development □QUAN)

Exploratory research has a sequential nature, where one phase helps build the other phase through its results. Eventually, the results of the two phases provide the overall research study interpretations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The function of the first phase is to explore potential factors and issues, as a base for developing ideas in a specific context. These are then utilised in the second phase as a further study, building a new instrument in order to validate and generalise the initial findings of the first qualitative research by the second quantitative research, sequentially. In other words in the sequential exploratory mixed methods, after attaining the exploratory results, the initial results are specified and tested using the second, quantitative phase after which results may be generalised. The quantitative results then help assess the initial qualitative results. After assessing the categories and themes emerging from the

qualitative study, items are identified to be used in a quantitative instrument and quantitative survey (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

The three-phase approach can be utilised where the qualitative data is gathered by the researcher and then analysed, in Phase I. It is then used for instrument development followed by quantitative data collection and then analysed, through the administration to a larger sample of a population, which is in Phase II. This is then followed by the interpretation of the findings in phase III, as summarised by Creswell & Plano Clark, (2017) see figure 4.1

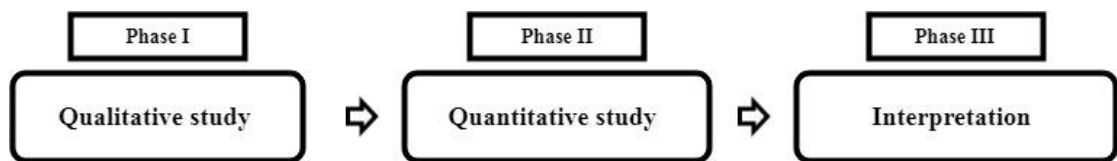


Figure 4. 1: Sequential Exploratory mixed method Design

4.6.1 Sequential Exploratory instrument development model

According to Creswell & Plano Clark, (2009), there are two common models of the sequential exploratory mixed methods: the taxonomy development model and the instrument development model. Each of these models starts with a qualitative phase and ends in a quantitative phase. The two models differ in the way they connect the two phases and the relative weight attached to each type of data (QUAN or QUAL) used by the researcher in the study. This study adopts the instrument development model, which is used when a researcher wishes to develop and implement a quantitative instrument based on qualitative findings. See Figure 4.2

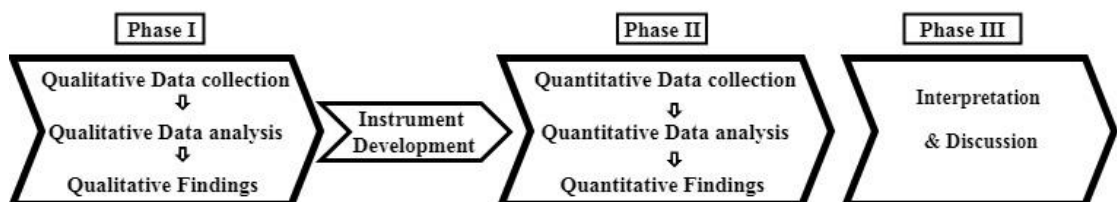


Figure 4. 2: Sequential Exploratory instrument development model.

With the instrument development model, the researcher starts first by exploring the research phenomena using a small sample of participants in phase I, which is the qualitative part. Then the researcher begins the development of items and scales for a quantitative survey instrument using the useful qualitative findings. Through data

collection in the second phase, the implementation and validation of the instrument will be conducted quantitatively. Researchers utilising this instrument development model often focus on the quantitative aspect of the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017) which is the case in this study. In contrast, the taxonomy development model is used when the researcher uses a qualitative phase first in order to find out the important variables then starts to develop a taxonomy or classification system, or to develop an emergent theory. The second phase, which is the quantitative part, is utilised to test or study these findings of the qualitative phase in a more detailed way. (Morgan, 1998; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998 as cited by Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Therefore, the taxonomy development model of sequential exploratory mixed method design is utilised when a researcher intends to form quantitative research questions or hypotheses based on qualitative findings and then conduct a quantitative study in order to answer the research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

4.7 Sequential Mixed Methods Framework Design: Strengths and Rationale

There are various strengths attributed to the sequential exploratory design (Creswell (2017)). It includes a two phase approach, where the quantitative research is carried out after the qualitative research. Description of the analysis and reporting is done appropriately through this sequential process of exploratory design. The researcher who needs comprehensive information beyond the qualitative results can use this research design which is beneficial if a new instrument is to be developed (Creswell, 2017).

Additionally, using a sequential exploratory design based on an initial qualitative research study could make the study acceptable to a research community, committee or an advisor specialising in quantitative research, since it has been integrated with the quantitative approaches. This design is well organised and straightforward in terms of applying, describing and reporting, because of the separate phases of this design (Creswell & Plano Clark, (2017)). Since the qualitative phase is central in this design, by including the quantitative components, it would become acceptable to audiences who are quantitative-biased. By using both qualitative and quantitative data sources, and methods, this enables the researcher to triangulate the data.

However, there are some drawbacks related to the sequential exploratory model which must be taken into account, as stated by Creswell, (2017). The sequential exploratory model needs a long time to complete the two phases of data collection and this could be

an issue for some research studies. There are some key decisions which need to be made by the researchers in order to utilise the initial findings from the qualitative phase in the next quantitative phase, for instance, multiple themes, group comparisons or one theme. As part of the instrument development model, the researcher needs to identify the kind of data to be utilised from the qualitative phase, in order to build a strong quantitative instrument, as well as making sure the sources on which the instrument is developed are trustworthy, valid and reliable.

Despite the logistical difficulties the researcher faced in applying a mixed method approach the researcher in this study utilised the sequential exploratory mixed methods design, as presented by Creswell & Plano Clark, (2017). There are several reasons for using specifically the sequential exploratory mixed methods design in this study. In the present research, the sequential exploratory mixed methods design was applied in order to attain specific advantages of this approach and be able to use the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches to obtain new and rich data in order to address and answer the research question properly (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Using this approach provides the researcher with both kinds of data, containing words and numbers, which give better understanding (Caracelli & Greene, 1993). Thus, such a strategy which allows the use of multiple data types can be valuable, offering the best opportunity to answer the research questions of this study. A sequential exploratory strategy is the preferred procedure if any instrument needs to be developed or tested by the researcher, because already existing instruments may not be adequate for the context of the study, and unavailable to generalise the results of phase I, which is the qualitative part. Thus, the researcher used this methodology in order to build, in the second phase, an instrument based on phase I, themes and sub- themes occurring in both the previous studies in the literature. The second phase of the sequential exploratory mixed methods design, the quantitative part of the study, was used in order to test and generalize qualitative findings. As Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003) mentioned, results can be generalized through the use of quantitative data, while providing individual voices through the use of qualitative data.

Furthermore, a sequential exploratory mixed methods design is also used if variables are unknown, information is lacking or a theoretical framework is not clear. With this approach, results may be generalized to groups by the research and this includes the testing of an emergent classification or theory (Morgan, 1998, Morse, 1991). If an

emergent classification or theme needs to be tested, this design would be appropriate, as the qualitative phase results are applied to generalize the findings to other groups or samples. Hence, with the help of the sequential exploratory mixed methods design, new themes, variables and sub-themes can be extracted by the researcher. Therefore, the researcher of this study also used the sequential exploratory mixed methods design to be able to explore new embedded variables, themes and sub- themes that occur specifically in the context of the current study and to test the new embedded variables, themes and sub- themes resulting from phase I, which is the qualitative part. Thus, new themes have been explored and extracted in this study relating to academic writing issues facing Saudi EFL students. Creswell et al (2017) believed that exploratory designs help explore relationships if the variables are unknown, enable emerging theory to be tested and refined to assist in developing new psychological assessment instruments using the initial qualitative analysis and so allow qualitative results to be generalized to a particular population. Thus, the researcher used this methodology to be able to obtain the perspectives of a large number of students in order to be able to generalise the results of the study. The exploratory sequential design gave the researcher the opportunity to explore the phenomenon deeply before being able to generalise the results to a different or broader group (Creswell & Plano-Clark 2017).

4.7.1 Timing

Timing of the data collection can be either concurrent or sequential. Thus, if a researcher collects the both types of data at the same time, the design is considered concurrent or one-phase, however if a researcher collects the data at different times and analyses it and interprets it in different phases, the design is considered sequential (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Morse, 1991). The sequence of the three phases influence which data will be collected and analysed first. Thus, in this study, qualitative data were collected and analysed first, then questionnaire for the quantitative part was designed and then the data were collected and analysed. After that both results of phases I and II were mixed together as a result of the study in phase III. The overall timing of the data collection in this study was sequential as it followed the exploratory mixed method design.

4.7.2 Weighting / Priority

Weighting is the priority and the importance or emphases given to one of the data sets in mixed methods, whether the qualitative or quantitative data within the study

(Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). Priority and weighting can be given to one data form and also equal weighting can be given to both forms of data which will play equally important roles in the study (Morgan, 1998). In the sequential exploratory mixed method, the use of the qualitative phase is usually to explore new themes and to build a new instrument based on the findings of the qualitative part. Thus, the priority and greater weight of this sequential exploratory study was given to the quantitative survey part. This was because the goal of this study is to explore issues facing students in academic writing, where there might be new embedded issues in the study context and then to develop an instrument as a quantitative survey to confirm and generalise the findings of the study which required a large number of participants and a large amount of quantitative analysis as well. Therefore, this will be only achieved by adopting this sequential exploratory mixed method model with this current sequence and order and that is why more emphasis and weighting was given to the quantitative phase of the study.

4.8 Research in practice

4.8.1 Research Site

Taif University is located in Taif City, which is one of the cities of Makkah province in the western Region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The university has two separate campuses, one for females and one for males. The researcher collected the data in the male campus only. All of the EFL male students in the department of foreign languages majoring in English at Taif University are Arabs and their native language is Arabic. English is a foreign language for them as it is in Saudi Arabia in general. The English language is not commonly used and widespread among Saudi society, especially in Taif because there are not many foreigners in the city. The campus has two entrances, north and south and nobody can enter the campus without a university licence or University ID. Inside the campus there are many buildings for academic faculties and administration. The researcher spent almost four months collecting the data in the department of foreign languages. The total number of the students in the department is almost 420 undergraduate students distributed in three academic years: year two, year three and year four after finishing year one as a foundation year.

At first the researcher spent one month conducting six individual face to face open ended unstructured interviews with EFL students. Two students were from the second academic year, another two students from the third academic year and the last two

students were from the fourth academic year. The interviews were conducted in the office of one of the academic teachers. The department of foreign languages is on the second floor of the Faculty of Arts Building. It contains many offices for the academic teachers and many lecture rooms.

The researcher distributed the questionnaires to the EFL students in the three academic years, in the lecture rooms and audio lab rooms of the department. The arrangements for gaining access to the research site are discussed in the ethical considerations section (see: section 4.13 Ethical considerations).

4.8.2 Qualitative research: phase one

The main purpose of this qualitative study is exploring the in-depth information specifically regarding issues facing students in academic writing in a Saudi context in order to build a quantitative survey instrument. This qualitative phase included data collection procedures such as a qualitative method (interview), interview piloting, and qualitative interview sample and a qualitative analysis process in the form of thematic Analysis.

4.8.2.1 Qualitative study method (Interview)

One of the main advantages of utilising interviews in a qualitative study is that it allows the researcher to obtain in-depth information related to a specific topic in a particular context. Through conducting an interview, valuable and meaningful information from the interviewee is obtained (Kvale, 2006). In this study, issues facing EFL Saudi students in academic writing at Taif University were explored qualitatively, through interviews. First, the Institution's approval was obtained to conduct the interviews (see Appendix A). Then the researcher conducted individual face to face unstructured interviews using one open ended question "What do you think of the academic English writing teaching and study at Taif University?".

Unstructured interviews were used with six undergraduate students specialising in English at the foreign language department at Taif University. The researcher used unstructured interviews for more than one reason. First, it gave the participants the freedom to talk about all the issues related to academic writing without pressure or focus from the researcher concerning any particular issue, which enabled the collection of as rich information as possible from the respondents. Driscoll (2010) stated the one of the categories of the interview is an open-ended interview, which allows the

interviewee the opportunity to speak freely and informally with more confidence to express their views and opinions in a relaxed style. An unstructured interview also gives both the interviewer and the interviewee the opportunity to understand the meanings of each other by explaining or repeating any unclear questions or responses as well as the flexibility of unstructured interviews where there is no fixed set of questions. An ethical consent form was signed after explaining to the participants their ethical rights, namely, that the interview would be confidential and they were free to express their thoughts freely, whether positive or negative, to talk about all the negative and positive aspects and experiences they faced related to academic writing teaching and learning. The researcher informed them that all the information would be used for the purpose of developing the English writing education in Taif University. A purposive sampling technique was used recruiting six EFL students. The six EFL students were from different academic levels of study (second, third and fourth year students). Interviews were conducted twice a week over a one month period. The interview duration was approximately 15 minutes. During the interview the participants were given the time and opportunity to speak freely about whatever they faced related to academic writing and whether they have any positive or negative comments or suggestions about the teaching and learning of English academic writing courses in the department.

4.8.2.2 Qualitative analysis process: thematic Analysis

There are many ways to analyse qualitative data (e.g., phenomenology, grounded theory, case study, ethnography, narrative). However, the researcher of the current study utilised a thematic analysis strategy to analyse the qualitative data. Thematic analysis emphasises following patterns in the data in order to gather and interpret data under major themes and sub themes. Creswell (2007) pointed out that the thematic strategy involves preparing and organising the data to be ready for analysis and then categorising the data into themes and sub themes by the process of coding in order to represent the data in forms of figures, tables, or a discussion. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) it can be considered as a realist method or a constructionist method. The realist method is used to report the participants' experiences, meanings and the reality, whereas a constructionist approach can be used to be able to examine how events, realities, meanings, experiences and others affect different discourses socially and how these operate within society. There are six phases of thematic analysis strategies illustrated by Braun and Clarke (2006) which the researcher of this study adopted as a guide to the analysis process (see Table (4.1)).

Table 4. 1 : Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Familiarizing yourself with your data
Generating initial codes
Searching for themes
Reviewing themes
Defining and naming themes
Producing the report

4.8.3 Quantitative research: phase two

The main purpose of this quantitative study is to examine and explore the topic on a larger number of EFL students to be able to generalise the results of the context and also confirm the results of phase one. This quantitative phase included data collection procedures such as the survey instrument's development as a questionnaire, and population sampling.

4.8.3.1 The Quantitative method (Questionnaire Survey)

The questionnaire is considered one of the most common methods used in educational research Cohen et al. (2011). A questionnaire is defined as a list of questions or items asked by an individual to be responded to in a written form (Wiersma, 2005). In the same line, Alassaf (1998) stated that there are many types of questionnaires like photo-questionnaires or closed and open questionnaire items, thus each type of questionnaire has its own conditions to be used and for a specific purpose. There are many advantages for using questionnaire, as highlighted by Bryman (2012) who stated that a questionnaire has many advantages, for instance, the responses are not affected by interviewer bias, they are quicker to distribute, easier to administer and convenient for the respondents. Also, the most important positive aspects of the questionnaire are having a lot of data by sending the questionnaire to large sample (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2008). While a questionnaire is considered one of the most effective tools with a structured format, it enables a large quantity of information to be gained (Wilson and McClean, 1994). The researcher decided to develop a new quantitative questionnaire as the data collection instrument for Phase II. Therefore, a survey instrument for this study was developed based on themes which emerged from phase I, in addition to themes and issues identified in the literature review.

4.8.3.2 Major procedures of questionnaire development

In regard to the current study as a quantitative measure, the researcher considered that the questionnaire method is one of the most suitable and effective quantitative tools that enables the researcher to survey a large sample in order to answer the research question. The questionnaire survey was developed for the study to include the five main themes and their own sub-themes which had emerged from phase I. In this way the questionnaire was developed to enable the data to be examined to see whether or not the five themes were present in the opinions of a larger sample of respondents. Thus, the final questionnaire consisted of sixteen sections; fifteen represented the sub-themes totalling 62 items. The questionnaire included a very short demographic section consisting of two items, one asked about age and the other asked about the academic year level. The questionnaire section headings of themes and sub-themes are listed in a table below (see appendix for the full questionnaire).

Table 4. 2 : The questionnaire sections headings of themes and sub-themes

main theme	sub-theme	literature review references	interviews' key words
(1) linguistics learner study skills	Poor EFL proficiency.	Mousavi & Kashefian, 2011; Sidek, 2010; Tahaine, 2009; Buis, 2007; Kellogg & Raulerson, 2007; Olivas & Li, 2006; Later, Roca de Larios, Marín & Murphy, 2001; Hyland, 2000; Wang 2003.	“how to use punctuation.” “ to be good in grammar” “ to build good and strong sentences.” “ low level of English language proficiency.”
	lack of vocabulary	Alfaki, 2015; Al-Sawalha & Chow, 2012; Alamirew, 2005; Hadjer, 2014; Flores, 2008; Melese, 2007; Salem, 2007; Fukao & Fujii, 2001; Hawthorne, 2008; Chan, 2010; Zhou, 2009; Mahfoudhi, 2003	“ increase their vocabulary.” “ gain new vocabulary to use them in writing.” “ student does not have enough vocabulary.” “ not be able to express his ideas.”
	poor knowledge of writing styles and structure	Evans & Green, 2007; Myhill, 2005; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004; Harklau, 2003; Heller, 1999; Nampota & Thompson, 2007; Barker, 2000; Creme & Lea, 2003; Hyland, 2000; Jackson, 2005; Krause, 2001; Lea & Street, 2000, 1998; Lillis, 2001; Vardi, 2000; Chan, 2010; Hinkel, 2001; John, 2012; Mu & Carrington, 2007; Thompson & Ye, 1991; Zhou, 2009; Brown, 2007; Tribble, 1996.	“ poor knowledge of English writing” “ weak structures and organisation of different writing styles” “ no ideas about different types of essay writing organization.” “ struggle with English writing.” “ do not have a strong background about English writing.”
(2) psychological learner study skills	students' motivation	Ankawi, 2015; Broussard & Garrison, 2004; Bacha, 2002; Bahous, Bacha, & Nabhani, 2011; Davies, 1998; Leki, 1991; Silva, 1997; Thomsan, 2003; Zamel 1997.	“the general environment is not supportive.” “nothing motivates you to practice writing.” “create no motivation for us.”

	writing anxiety	Cava, 1999; Cheng, 2002; Pajares & Johnson, 1994; Yan, 1998; Aida, 1994; Scheier & Carver, 1992; Pajares & Johnson, 1994; Yan, 1998; Aida, 1994; Scheier & Carver, 1992; Lee, 2001.	“we are scared speak and write.” “scared from the teachers and classmates’ reaction if we make mistakes.” “criticising the students writing in front of the other students.” “affected by the student emotion.” “afraid from making mistakes and getting criticism.” the teachers’ and classmates’ negative comments.”
(3) teaching practices	Inappropriate teaching methods.	Alkubaidi, 2014; Alhaisoni, 2012; Fadda, 2012; Pishghadam and Ghanizadeh, 2006; Sasaki, 2000; Lee, 2003; Al-Sawalha & Chow, 2012; Al-Mehwari, 2005; Al-Refa'ai, 2001; El Abed, 1991; Bacha, 2010; Reid, 2002; Ferris, 2002; Reppen, 2002; Hawthorne, 2008; Seow, 2002	“teachers follow the traditional teaching writing methods.” “asked us to copy them and do the same.”
	Insufficient writing practice	Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Huwari & Al-Khasawneh, 2013; Ansari, 2012; Alhaysony, 2012; Chokwe, 2011; Barkhuizen, 1998; Hawkins, 2005; Gelb, 2012; Adas & Bakir, 2013; Lee & Lee, 2013	“practices are the best.” “need more practices.” “we really don’t practise.” “will not improve in English writing unless they do a lot of practices.”
	Teacher and peer feedback	Jones, 2011; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris, 1997; Lee, 2007; Storch & Tapper, 2007; Al-Hazmi, 1998; Levine, 2002; Yang, 2006; Chandler, 2003; Perpignan, 2003; Asiri, 1997; Abbuhl, 2005	“teachers will not have enough time to review what all the students wrote.” “teachers give no feedback.”
(4) writing textbooks	inappropriate writing textbooks in the foundation year	(Huwari & Al-Khasawneh, 2013; McMullen, 2009; Younes, & Arabia, 2016)	“very simple rules about writing” “we just study little things about English writing.” “textbook is for beginners.”
	inappropriate English writing textbooks in the language department	Alhaisoni, 2012; Al-Mehwari, 2005; Al-Refa'ai, 2001; So, & Lee, 2013; Al-Buainain, 2011; Albedaiwi, 2014;)	“textbook is hard to me.” “textbook is advanced and above our level.” “we barely write a few sentences.” “not relevant to what we need.” “we don’t start from scratch or beginner to advanced.” “English writing textbook in the department is not suitable.”
(5) contextual issues	class size	(Ahmad, 2010; Blatchford, 2007; Ballantyne, 2000; Isbell & Cote, 2009; Roettger, 2007; McGarr, 2009).	“the number of the students in the class is too many.” “teacher is unable to concentrate on each one in the practices and revising with each student.”
	insufficient time length of writing courses	(Kroll, 1990; White & Arndt, 1991; Italo, 1999; Guantum & Chakraverty, 2000; Raimes, 1983).	“not enough English writing courses.” “increase the number of the writing courses.”

Therefore, a questionnaire comprising the above list of sub-themes with a 5-point Likert Scale was developed and utilised as the main instrument. A Likert Scale is one of the most common response scales used in questionnaires giving participants the opportunity to use different rankings such as a 3, 5 or 7-point Likert Scale. It is frequently composed of a five-point scale rating choices for every single item to be chosen by the participants. The rationale for using structured sets of items with a Likert scale is to avoid open responses from the participants, which would make the data analysis more complicated and challenging as recommended by Phellas et al. (2011). According to Hennink et al. (2010) one of the advantages of structured research instruments is providing the large amount of data a researcher needs. Additionally, the Likert scale is giving the participations the freedom to make the appropriate choices among the particular five ratings which as a consequence the questionnaire became easy and quick to complete with increased reliability (Gay and Airasian, 2000; Oppenheim, 1992). Thus, the designed form of ranking choices of a 5-point Likert Scale is e.g. “strongly agree”, “agree”, “neutral”, “disagree”, “strongly disagree”, which was used by the researcher of this study. However, different rating scales, e.g. from “never” to “always”, or of evaluation, e.g. from “very poor” to “very good” can be used by researchers (Bryman, 2012).

4.9 Sampling / population of the study

4.9.1 Qualitative sample

The sample size of a research differs depending on the methodology of the research, the sample size of a quantitative study needs to be large, whereas the sample size for a qualitative study is smaller (Gentles, et al., 2015). Thus, some methodologists have stated that the recommended sample size in qualitative research should not be too small or too large. If the sample is too small it will be difficult to attain data saturation. Meanwhile, if the sample is too large, it will be difficult for the researcher to undertake a deep, qualitative analysis. Hence, the recommended sample size for interviews and focus groups could be between 3 to 12 (Onwuegbuzie, et al., 2009; Guest, et al., 2006). In a qualitative study the most important concern is to gain in-depth understanding and information to explain, describe, and interpret the topic of the study, rather than the number of the participants (Maxwell, et al., 2013).

The nature of the sequential exploratory mixed method design is to have a small sample in this qualitative study, then a larger size of sample in the following quantitative study.

In this qualitative phase, six participants were invited to participate and they all agreed voluntarily to be involved in the study. A purposive sampling technique was used by asking students from different academic years who were willing to be interviewed about the teaching and learning of English academic writing. The number of the students interviewed was only six because of the sequential nature of this study, which explored themes related to issues facing EFL students in academic writing in a particular context. The qualitative study was followed with a larger sample in the quantitative study. Regarding the variation of the sample, it is very important to collect data that represents the differences of the academic level of the participants of the context. Creswell (2017) suggests that it is preferred to choose diverse participants to represent and describe all perspectives of the topic and the context of the study. The six participants in the interviews represented the three academic levels: two interviewees from the second academic year, two from the third year and two from the fourth and last academic year.

After conducting all the six interviews successfully the researcher then utilised thematic analysis as a qualitative analysis strategy in order to extract themes, whether they emerged as new themes (emergent themes) occurring particularly in the study context or themes that already existed in the literature (see chapter three section 3.11 of the literature review) (Teddlie, & Tashakkori, 2009). These themes were utilised to develop a new quantitative instrument as a questionnaire survey (see above table 4.2 major procedures in questionnaire development), which was utilised to collect data from a large number of students studying English writing at the department of foreign languages at Taif University. Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) suggest that results emerging from qualitative data as codes can be used as variables in the quantitative part of the mixed method study and developed as questionnaire items. It is therefore important for the researcher to carefully determine the proper qualitative findings in order to build the survey instrument.

4.9.2 Quantitative Sample

The targeted population for this study was EFL undergraduate students specialising in English language studying in the foreign languages department at Taif University. These were in a total 425 EFL undergraduate students distributed in three academic years (second, third and fourth years). Sampling is used when it is not possible to include the entire population of the research study (Pickard, 2013). In this sequential exploratory mixed method design study, two kinds of samples were used to extract data from separate phases, purposive for the interviews and convenience for the

questionnaire. The sample of the quantitative study was 400 EFL undergraduate students. The study did not include the students who did not want to participate in the study and who were absent during the data collection of the quantitative study. The sample sizes of the two phases, the qualitative phase and the quantitative phase are not equal because of the nature of the methodology used. Similarly, Creswell et al. (2008) utilised unequal sampling in the qualitative and quantitative phases of mixed methods studies for the purpose of providing a full picture of the situation, generalisation and instrument development. The two samples of this study were from the same context, in order to explore and represent the context itself, because using samples from different contexts would not enable the collection of meaningful information and interpretation of the data.

4.10 Pilot study

Conducting a pilot study is important for the researcher in order to test the tools which will be utilised in the research to be able to explore any problems and benefits and the effectiveness of applying those tools before employing them in the actual research (Balnaves and Caputi, 2001). It is recommended by a considerable number of scholars to conduct a pilot study of the research instruments. For example, Bell (1999) claimed that piloting should be conducted in order to check on the clarity of the questions and items, to ensure whether they are understandable or not and to be able to remove and clarify the ambiguity of any questions and items and eliminate any not related to the topic of the research study. Moreover, Converse and Presser (1986) state that while the purpose of the pilot study is to make sure of the clarity of questions and the correlation between questions asked to the participants and their responses, before applying the targeted instrument in the main study. Thus, this section elaborated and presented in detail the pilot study for both qualitative and quantitative phases.

4.10.1 Qualitative Interview Piloting

A pilot interview of the qualitative part was performed with two participants. The first one was a PhD student who had done interviews before in his study and has experience. All feedback and comments have been taken into consideration and adjustments were made to the interview and the approaches to conducting the interview based on the experience of this interviewer. Examples of feedback and comments from the pilot have been taken into consideration and adjusted such as giving the students the freedom to talk without guiding them in any particular direction the researcher wanted or leading

them to any answers the researcher needed, not interrupting them, taking notes about important issues then asking them, where appropriate, to explain more about each important issue they had previously mentioned and specifically seeking more details about each issue they faced in academic writing. From conducting the pilot study, the researcher learned and obtained more experience and familiarity with the proper way of managing and monitoring the interview, gaining more experience about the logistical considerations of data collection and how to make the participants feel comfortable in the interview and openly willing to give information. Moreover, the pilot study informed the researcher whether appropriate data and responses would be obtained from this kind of interview or not. As a result, the researcher found that an unstructured interview gave the participants the freedom to talk about all the issues related to academic writing without pressure or direction from the researcher concerning any particular issue.

4.10.2 Quantitative Questionnaire Piloting

A questionnaire should be tested for its validity and reliability, to confirm whether it is appropriate for the sample or not and to ensure the accuracy of its meaning. In the same line, Bryman (2012) indicated some of the purposes of the pilot study as enabling the researcher to ensure that the instruments of the study operate well, and exploring the clarity of the questions and items, to be able to avoid any misunderstandings and wrong or non –responses. Alassaf (1998) supported this view by stating that conducting a pilot study on an instrument enables the researcher to benefit from the participants' opinions related to the tools and to correct any possible mistakes and reduce any bias.

The pilot study of the questionnaire for the quantitative phase was performed on 25 EFL students studying English language in the department of foreign languages at Taif University, the context of the study. They were asked not only to answer questions but also to evaluate the clarity and the understanding of all items. They answered all items of the questionnaire, except the two open ended questions which most of the participants did not answer. Thus, the two open ended questions were excluded which shortened the length of time students would need to answer the questionnaire. They have stated that all items were clear and understandable and easy to answer. All 25 students who completed the pilot study were excluded from taking part in the main study. This approach is supported by Bryman (2012), who argued that the participants in a pilot study should not be included as members in the actual study. The final stage

was distributing the final version in the main study taking into account the exclusion of students who participated in the pilot study. The result of Cronbach's Alpha was good and high (.800) which as a result gave the researcher more confidence to carry out the study.

4.11 Validity and reliability

Checking and assessing the validity and reliability of any instrument is very important in order to be able to evaluate any social research quality (Bryman, 2012). Without validity research is considered invalid and worthless where validity is one of the main pillars of research (Cohen, 2011).

4.11.1 Validity of qualitative study

There are many ways to ensure the validity in qualitative research. Thus, various methods can be used to ensure the quality of qualitative data, such as trustworthiness, credibility confirmability and reflexivity. These procedures were applied in this study.

A. Trustworthiness

Hammersley (2013) stated that through the objectives of the research, qualitative data can be assessed for truth or falsity. When the purpose of the research is to understand a specific social context and explain the perspectives of actors of this particular context, then there is no need to assess the validity of the research. However, if the purpose of the data of the research is extracted to be used as source information regarding a particular social context, then the 'truth' of the data is very important and must be protected. Hence, the main purpose of the qualitative part of this study is to explore issues facing EFL Saudi undergraduate students in academic writing and from the qualitative data findings a new instrument will be developed and utilised, thus the data was considered a source of information. Therefore, it was necessary to meet the issue of 'truth'.

The terms 'reliability' and 'validity' come from the positivist paradigm and are mainly used in quantitative research. It is arguable whether these terms 'reliability' and 'validity' are appropriate to be used in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that qualitative research has its own different appropriate terms and criteria used in order to ensure the quality of qualitative research, thus the terms of the quantitative research are different from the terms used in qualitative research. Therefore, they suggest that the term trustworthiness should be maintained in qualitative research rather than using reliability and validity. In the qualitative phase of the current study,

assessment of the trustworthiness of the qualitative data was assured as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), through examining the credibility and confirmability of the data and the data collection procedures.

B. Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is equivalent to internal validity in the quantitative research. However, it is related to the extent of reality implanted in the study findings, which are considered one of the most important aspects of the trustworthiness of a qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In this study, triangulation was used to ensure data credibility, which involves combining at least two methods of collecting data in order to gain a more complete understanding of the research topic being studied. The use of triangulation method clarifies and improves the quality of the data (Guba, 1981). Using triangulation as a means of assessing credibility in this study enabled the researcher to obtain a deeper understanding of the relationship between the approaches used as well as giving the researcher the opportunity to discover problems within each approach.

C. Confirmability

Confirmability is concerned about the data's reliability, with regard to investigator and researcher bias, where findings should be formed by participants more than they are formed by the researcher. Lincoln and Guba (1985) mentioned that confirmability is very important in qualitative questioning.

There are various strategies to ensure confirmability of the research study's findings. The research of the current study achieved confirmability by using a second researcher whose role was to check the process of data analysis ensuring that codes, themes and categories were related and consistent.

D. Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the awareness of the researcher regarding all stages of the research process. Therefore, researcher should be aware when collecting and analysing the data of every single detail from the beginning to the end, avoiding anything that might influence any part of the study, such as prior experience and those environmental considerations. The researcher was an insider which had both advantages and disadvantages. These have been discussed more fully in section 4.12 under 'positionality'.

4.11.2 Validity of quantitative study

The validity is one of the most important features for any instrument. According to Creswell (2009) in the quantitative study traditionally the researcher should test and report the validity of the instrument. This includes three categories of validity tests which should be done for an instrument in order to check and assess the validity. These validity tests include the content validity, predictive validity and construct validity. The Content validity checks and assesses the validity of the content of items of the scale while, predictive validity checks and assesses the validity of the accuracy of the predicted answers that came out from the scores of the scale and construct validity checks and assesses the validity of whether the items of instrument scale represent the concepts and constructs they target and test.

Thus, the questionnaire was sent by email to four lecturers specialising in the English language for checking and assessing the content of the questionnaire items, in order to know whether the instrument was well structured to obtain data which answer the research questions accurately and appropriately. The reviewers sent valuable feedback regarding the questionnaire, identifying various kinds of mistakes. Among these mistakes were grammatical mistakes, spelling mistakes, repeated and unclear questions. All those mistakes were corrected and repeated questions were deleted and ambiguous questions clarified. Examples for those changes and corrections have been made such as item 11 (I believe that I do not know the right structure to follow to write proper composition or essay.) deleted because it is repeated and similar to item (12), also this item (I have learned how to write the main parts of composition or essay.) has some grammatical mistakes and was corrected to (I have learned how to write the main parts of a composition or an essay). Another example was with item 34 (I think that the English textbook doesn't provide for (delete) students with (add) different writing strategies which are used in university studies). Another example of the ambiguity of some of the items which have been changed was item 55 (The teachers pass on the new subject very fast and concern more to finish and cover the textbook. (Vague), Changed to (Writing skill teachers are more concerned with covering the textbook as quickly as possible). Another example of repetition was this item which was deleted as well (The teachers do not) explain the feedback on my writing explicitly. (vague and unnecessary repeated Q) also, item 59 was deleted because it was too big and repeated another item (I think that the teacher could not give all the students equal focus and attention because of the big number of students in the class. (is too big, repeated and not necessary). The

researcher had been advised to avoid negative statements (i.e. do not, cannot) in writing a questionnaire because it may give indication for a negative attitude and may encourage participants to choose negative answers too. Additionally, the researcher avoided using any words leading to specific meanings and which may encourage participants to choose particular responses (e.g., How badly, I love to have, extremely bad or good).

4.11.3 Reliability

The questionnaire was revised and corrected. The questionnaire was then sent to two Arabic-to-English translation specialists, one worked as a lecturer in translation at Taibah University and the other worked as a lecturer in King Abdul-Aziz University in the English language Department. The first translator translated the questionnaire into Arabic and then the Arabic translation was sent to another translator to be translated back into English. The English translation was then compared with the original questionnaire. After comparing the two versions the most accurate and clear among them was chosen and adopted as a final version. Finally, the English version was sent to another translator to translate into Arabic and compare the previous Arabic translation with the current translation to check the accuracy in the two versions and choose the most accurate translation.

Reliability is the degree to which the assessment tool's measurement produces stable and consistent results (Gay, 2000, Easterby Smith et al., 2002; Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2002). A Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 is recommended as the minimum cut off for a reliable measure (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994,). Moreover, Cronbach's alpha is the average of correlations calculated between the scores on two halves of the instrument when the full set of items is divided in half in all possible ways. As seen in Table 4.3 below when Cronbach's alpha is higher than 0.7, the reliability is acceptable.

Table 4. 3 : Internal consistency of Cronbach's alpha

Cronbach's alpha	Internal consistency
>0.9	Excellent
0.9 -> 0.8	Good
0.8 -> 0.7	Acceptable
0.7->0.6	Questionable
0.6->0.5	Poor
0.5	Unacceptable

Source: George and Mallery, 2003

The reliability test has been conducted including all the items from the pilot study as a first test before doing any statistical tests (e.g. factor analysis and descriptive analysis). Thus, the reliability of the questionnaire was $\alpha=0.700$ which is Acceptable. However, as recommended by the SPSS program in order to increase the reliability of the questionnaire, the total number of the questionnaire items was reduced. As a consequence, the reliability of the questionnaire increased to $\alpha=0.800$ (Cronbach's Alpha) which is considered good. This did not affect the content of the questionnaire, as each theme and sub-theme included more than one item to measure them. 400 questionnaires were distributed to EFL students of three academic years at the English language department at Taif University. After return, 34 questionnaires were excluded because they were uncompleted, and in some of them some pages were missing. Also, in three of them the answers were all strongly agree and in one questionnaire all the answers were disagree, so these were excluded as well.

4.12 Positionality

Positionality is considered as the connections and interactions between the researcher and all aspects of the researched (Barton, 1998). It includes aspects of identity, such as gender, class, sexuality and others and the researcher's personal experience of conducting research (for example, attending research training, previous research projects) which might impact and interact in the research (Hopkins 2007). Understanding and taking into consideration all aspects of positionality is very important to data collection and analysis because the different identities of the researcher might affect the research processes and outcomes (Valentine 2002; Vanderbeck 2005).

The aim of the current study was to explore the English academic writing issues encountered by Saudi EFL students in Taif University when engaging with academic writing in general, and to identify the main factors that affected the students. These might relate to the curricula, teaching methods, learners' study skills, the contextual issues, and any other embedded academic writing issues facing Saudi EFL students in particular. The researcher of this study works in the foreign language department at Taif University and has interacted with most of the academic staff. Thus, the researcher is considered as an 'insider' of the study setting. He has the same nationality as the students, speaks the same native language, Arabic, works and taught in the same department and thus is very familiar with the study setting (Sultana 2007). Moreover, as

he shares the same culture and religion as the students he understood well how to deal with them respectfully, taking into consideration their cultural and religious values (Kaler 2004). The researcher is an English language lecturer the University where he has taught many courses, including academic writing. He has taught EFL undergraduate students in three academic levels (i.e. second, third and fourth academic year). There were two segregated campuses, male and female campuses the researcher worked and taught in the male campus only.

The position of the researcher as an insider benefitted the research in the implications of the research process and reducing challenges. For example, an academic supervisor was chosen by the department and the university to be responsible for the researcher, in order to observe the progress of the data collection and offer any necessary help or consultation regarding the university regulations. Furthermore, most of the lecturers were helpful towards the researcher, giving access to their classes and helping in monitoring and distributing the questionnaires. A few excused themselves from giving their classes to the researcher because they were delayed in their lessons, but the researcher was able to arrange other dates to distribute the questionnaires. All these benefits were obtained easily because the researcher was considered as an insider. Many researchers have mentioned the benefits the insider researcher can obtain such as access, data reporting and participants (see also Harvey 1996; De Andrade 2000; DeLyser 2001; Sherif, 2001; Merriam et al., 2001; Chavez 2008).

However, positionality as an 'insider' brings disadvantages into the research process. Researchers in such a position could have biases in conducting interviews and not make an effort to understand the issues in depth because they consider themselves already to know everything related to the issues and the topic being explored (Zavella 1996). It is not possible for a researcher to remain completely unbiased during the data collection, analysis and interpretation (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, an 'insider' researcher must be fully aware of the challenges of all aspects of positionality and always keep in mind the actual role of the researcher (Zavella 1996; Brayboy & Deyhle 2000; Kusow 2003). As an insider researcher it is important to point out that the researcher has been absent from the University from 5 years researching for this doctorate and therefore was not in direct teaching contact with, or assessment of, the students involved in this study, so in this respect, he was something of an 'outsider' to the students.

The relationship between the researcher and the students in the department has developed gradually during the pilot study and the interviews. Thus, the atmosphere was comfortable between them allowing the participants to talk more freely about the issues they faced without any fear.

4.13 Ethical Considerations

In this research there are potential ethical issues that had to be considered during the conducting of both phases, the qualitative and quantitative studies. The observation of ethical issues during qualitative research is very important in order to maintain the reliability of the data collected (Orb & Wynaden, 2001). According to the British Educational Research Association (2011) researchers must avoid or at least minimise any harm to the participants. For example, they should avoid mentioning their names, as a respect for the participants' privacy, allow the participants to express themselves and make the decision whether to participate in the research freely without any kind of pressure and give them the opportunity to withdraw their participation at any time. Therefore, the researcher ensured all the ethical and legal guidelines were followed and applied. The names of the participants and any identifying information were kept confidential. Several steps were taken by the researcher to address the ethical issues. First, permission for conducting the study was obtained from the university. Bell (1999:37) confirms that:

Permission to carry out an investigation must always be sought at an early stage. As soon as you have an agreed project outline and have read enough to convince yourself that the topic is feasible, it is advisable to make a formal, written approach to the individual and organisations concerned, outlining your plan.

Thus, ethical forms were filled in and submitted by the researcher to obtain permission to conduct the study. Approval for the study was received from the Faculty of Education committee at Hull University (see Appendix A) before starting collecting any data.

In addition, an institutional consent form was signed by the head of the foreign languages department at Taif University to give permission for the collection of data (see Appendix B).

Another consent form was shared with each participant, who were adult students over 18 years old, explaining to them their rights informing them that any important and

confidential information revealed to the researcher, such as criticism related to the teachers (e.g. bias or discrimination), the textbook, teaching methods and the department or other ethical issues about which students did not want their identity to be identified, would be kept confidential. Any information related to the name or identity to the participants would remain confidential and it was explained to them that the main purpose of the interview was to gather data about issues EFL students face in academic writing at Taif University in order to obtain the students' perceptions on academic writing issues occurring in the Taif University context. Appointments for the interviews were made according to the students' availability. Finally, before starting the interview the researcher ensured that the participant understood that their information would be recorded in the interview and would be used in the write-up of the research. They were again informed that all information would be kept confidential and that they were free to withdraw from the research at any time. Their informed consent, as part of the ethics approval process was gained.

Additionally, students in phase two were informed of their ethical rights in a letter attached to the survey, explaining that participation and completion of the survey were completely voluntary and would not affect in any way their relations with teachers or the department. They were not asked to write name, students' numbers or class number so their identity was unknown even by the researcher. It was explained that the information obtained from the questionnaires would be analysed and used in the write-up of the research. A consent statement was in the first page of each questionnaire and all the terms were explained by the researcher, ensuring that the participants understood that all information collected would remain confidential and they were free to withdraw from the research at any time.

When the research was completed all interview audio-files were deleted after writing the transcripts and all questionnaire papers of the survey were destroyed, for confidentiality reasons. Such measures are outlined by De Vaus (2002), who claimed that confidentiality of the data is very important for three reasons: to obtain good and honest responses, particularly on sensitive issues; to encourage participation in the study and thereby improve the representativeness of the sample; and to protect the privacy of the participants. By doing so, the researcher ensured that the information of the participants would be totally anonymous.

4.14 Summary

The philosophical methodology has been elaborated including the research questions and purpose, and then a brief methodological overview illustrated qualitative and quantitative methodology paradigms. After that, a pragmatic approach was argued for and then a range of mixed methods were illustrated. The rationale of the exploratory sequential mixed method used in this study and the advantages of using this kind of specific mixed method in this study were elaborated in detail including timing and weighing of the research methods. Then, both qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures were described in detail as research in practice including, the research site, methods and the process of collecting the data. Finally, the sampling, piloting, validity, reliability, positionality and ethical considerations were illustrated in separate sections. In the next chapter, the analysis and findings of phase I which is the qualitative study are presented.

5 CHAPTER FIVE: Phase I, Qualitative Data analysis and findings

5.1 Introduction

While the main purpose of the qualitative phase of the sequential exploratory mixed method adopted in this study was exploring the themes existing in a particular context leading to developing new quantitative instrument, the qualitative data gained from the interviews are presented. The analysis procedure is explained followed by details of the relevant sub-themes illustrated with quotations from the students.

5.2 Qualitative Data analysis

As mentioned above the researcher adopted the thematic analysis process to analyse the qualitative data and followed the six phases of thematic analysis strategies illustrated by Braun and Clarke (2006) see chapter four section (4.8.2.2 qualitative analysis process: thematic analysis). The researcher first transcribed the six audio- recorded interviews by translating all interviews into English. Then, the recorded interviews and both the Arabic and English translations were sent to a lecturer of translation specialising in Arabic –English translation to revise them to ensure there were no possible mistranslations or mistakes in the translation. After that the researcher began the analysis with reading the transcript over and over again, as a familiarisation phase. Then the researcher started with the second process, which was the coding process. This was done after multi reading of the transcripts. Thus, it involved coding the data manually by reading the transcript, looking for repeated words, phrases and statements. Similar words, phrases and statements were coded, and then similar codes grouped together creating the sub-themes and main themes. After that, the researcher reviewed and refined the themes carefully and the final sets of themes of the data were completed. According to Teddlie, and Tashakkori (2009) interviews should be reviewed many times in order to ensure the clarity of the emergent themes and subthemes, as well as to have a complete picture of the topic in its context. Then, a written report was completed including the main themes and sub themes which initially answer the research question taking into consideration every single detail from the beginning to the end. Finally, all the aforementioned stages were reviewed by a PhD student who had conducted interviews before to check the process of data analysis ensuring that codes, themes and categories were related and consistent.

5.3 The qualitative Findings

Four main issues had been identified from previous studies as influencing the academic writing of EFL students in different contexts. The first issue was learners' study issues which was divided in two main learners' study issues as linguistic learning issues and psychological learning issues. The linguistic learning issues affecting EFL English writing included four sub-themes, poor EFL proficiency, lack of vocabulary, prior knowledge of writing styles and organisational structures of English writing. The psychological learning issues affecting EFL English writing also included four sub-issues, students' attitudes towards writing, students' motivation, writing anxiety, and self-confidence. The third issue facing EFL students in different contexts was the issue of teaching practices which included three sub-issues, using inadequate teaching methods, lack of practice and teacher and peer feedback. The last issue was the contextual issue affecting EFL English writing which included, the number of students in a class (class size) and insufficient time of class sessions (see chapter 3, literature review section 3.11). The table below summarises those themes.

Table 5. 1 : Themes emerging from the literature review

English writing issues identified from the literature review	
sub- issues	main issues
poor EFL proficiency	Linguistic learning issues affecting EFL English writing
lack of vocabulary	
prior knowledge of writing	
styles and organisational structure of English writing.	
students' attitudes towards writing	Psychological learning issues affecting EFL English writing
students' motivation	
writing anxiety	
self-confidence	
Using inadequate teaching methods	Issues related to teaching practices
Teacher and peer feedback	
lack of practice	
the number of students in a class	Contextual issues affecting EFL English writing
insufficient time of class sessions	

However, according to the current study five main themes emerged from the qualitative data, including sub-themes. Accordingly, one new theme, (English writing textbooks), emerged from the interviews besides the four themes already existing in other contexts and mentioned in the literature review (see chapter 3, literature review section 3.11). These five main themes emerged from the data of the current study with sub-themes which are elaborated in detail in the following table and sections.

Table 5. 2 : Main and sub themes emerged from interviews

sub-theme code	Sub-Theme No.	main theme code	Theme No.
(EPLP) Poor EFL proficiency.	(1)	(ELP)	(1)
(ELV) lack of vocabulary	(2)	English language proficiency.	
(EPKW) poor knowledge of writing styles and structure	(3)		
(PLSM) students' motivation	(1)	(PLSS)	(2)
(PLWA) writing anxiety	(2)	psychological learner study skills	
(TUIN) using inadequate teaching methods	(1)	(TMP)	(3)
(TLP) lack of practice	(2)	teaching practices	
(TTPF) Teacher and peer feedback	(3)		
(TXITBF) inappropriate textbooks curriculum in the foundation year	(1)	(TBC)	(4)
(TXITBD) inappropriate English writing curriculum in language department	(2)	English writing textbooks	
(CCS) class size	(1)	(CNX)	(5)
(CINC) insufficient number of English writing courses	(2)	contextual issues	

5.3.1 First theme: English language proficiency

The first main theme was English language proficiency including three sub themes, such as poor EFL proficiency; lack of vocabulary; prior knowledge of writing and styles and organisational structure of English writing. These are examples of the sub-themes of this theme:

- **Poor EFL proficiency.**

This sub-theme represents the linguistic level of English language proficiency for the learners. EFL proficiency includes all grammatical aspects of the English language. Thus, the level of EFL proficiency impacts on the writing skill of students and their ability to write. As a consequence, when an EFL student has good EFL proficiency, the level of the English writing would be good in terms of there being fewer grammatical mistakes. Therefore, EFL proficiency is considered an issue facing some students in Taif University as example quotations from the interviews of participants suggest:

Participant 1:

“English writing in general is important and I think there are two things I faced in English writing. First the punctuation I really don't know how to use them properly and where to put them in the sentence.”

Participant 2:

“Student has to be good in grammar to build good and strong sentences, and if he does not, he will face difficulties while he is writing in English.”

Participant 6:

“the first obstacle we face in the English writing is the low level of the English language proficiency in general. For example, we are weak in reading, writing listening and speaking not only in writing.”

- **Poor knowledge of English writing styles and organisational structures.**

This theme represents the prior knowledge students had regarding the structures of different styles of writing in general, such as introduction, body and conclusion, that is to say understanding of different essay writing styles. Without this knowledge students could not write properly in English. Thus, according to some interviewees some students have no prior knowledge or have just a little knowledge regarding the structures of different styles of writing. For example, quotations from the interviews of participants:

Participant 2:

“The student has to follow the structures and organisations of different writing styles. The teachers are supposed to be kind with students and simplify all the advanced information that students need in English writing. This includes aspects like explaining different kinds of writing style and motivating the students to write in English taking into consideration that they have poor knowledge of English writing and weak English language proficiency.”

Participant 3

“We entered the department and we have no idea about different types of essay writing or the organisation of writing. That is why we struggle in English writing and we are required to have a massive amount of information about writing; we don't have at least general ideas about them.”

Participant 4

“We came to study in the department and we don’t have strong knowledge of the basis of English writing. So we feel that it is hard. In the department they expect that you know how to write or at least know the basic knowledge of English writing but unfortunately we have poor knowledge of the English writing.”

Participant 5:

“One of the main difficulties I face here is that they do not give us strong background information about English writing and don’t start from scratch or beginner to advanced. They deal with students as if they have good knowledge of English writing so, we face difficulties to cope with the knowledge they teach us.”

- **lack of vocabulary**

Vocabulary is very important in learning any foreign language. Therefore, without vocabulary students could not communicate with others and express thoughts and ideas in a written form. When students have a lot of vocabulary in the target language, it is easier for them to transfer thoughts and ideas smoothly in a written form. Thus, lack of vocabulary is considered one of the obstacles facing students in writing. Some example quotations from the interviewees of this study illustrate this point:

Participant 1:

“If students speak a lot with native speakers of the English language it will increase the students’ new vocabulary that they will use in their writing. As you know vocabulary is important in writing because the more vocabulary the students have, the more they can write.”

Participant 2,

“A student has to have enough vocabulary to be able to write well and write more because if he does not have enough vocabulary he will not be able to express his ideas. I mean also that vocabulary is words and the more you are exposed to a language the more vocabulary will be acquired. For example, watching movies and listening to music and reading books will increase the students’ vocabulary and they can use the words in writing.”

5.3.2 The second theme: the psychological learner study skills

The second theme was the psychological learner study skills issues which included two sub themes which were lack of motivation towards writing and writing anxiety. These are examples of each of the sub-themes of this theme:

- **Lack of motivation.**

Writing motivation is the willingness and desire of students to do something such as write (Broussard & Garrison, 2004). It is not an easy task to write in a foreign language, especially if students found it boring and difficult for them. Thus motivation plays a major role in enhancing and developing the academic writing of EFL students. According to some interviewees this sub-theme is considered one of the issues facing students in academic writing and these are example quotations from the interviewees of this study:

Participant 1:

“The reason could be the general environment is not supportive and nothing motivates you to practice writing or to write in English. I meant the Saudi context but not the university, in other words the environment outside the university does not encourage you to practice writing or to write in English.”

Participant 3:

“Most of the teachers follow the traditional teaching writing methods. For example, they explain for us how to write and asked us to do the same and they create no motivation for us to write more. We just follow what they said and teach to us.”

- **Writing anxiety.**

Some foreign language students do not feel comfortable and are nervous when they write in a foreign language. This is a natural psychological issue occurring with FL students; however, the degree of writing anxiety varies from one student to another which is why some students tend to avoid writing activities (Adifard & Koosha, 2013). According to the interviewees of this study some of the students face writing anxiety, for example:

Participant 1:

“Most of the students don’t practice any English writing, maybe only few students practice. I think there is no problem with the teachers. The problem is

from us; we don't practice English writing. I personally don't practice English writing and nobody has asked me to write. The teachers gave us advice about the importance of practicing English writing.'

Participant 2:

'I think writing practise exercises are very poor and we need more practice in the class and outside the classroom but some of the teachers criticise the students writing in front of the students. This affected the student's emotions and that stopped them from writing anymore. They were afraid of making mistakes and getting criticism from the teachers - that is all.'

Participant 5:

'Some of the students are good in English but they are too shy to speak or write because they are scared of the students' comments. Even if the students say nothing they are too shy to participate in front of all the students and the teacher because when my classmates and I work together I feel that some of the students are good and do not feel shy.'

5.3.3 The third theme: Teaching practices

The third main theme was teaching methods and practices. This theme includes three sub-themes which were the use of inadequate teaching methods, lack of practice and teacher and peer feedback. These are examples of the sub-themes of this theme.

- **Inappropriate methods for teaching writing.**

Some teachers used the traditional method to teach English writing whether it is appropriate for students or not. They have no knowledge of which other writing techniques and methods would be more useful (Reid, 2002). Choosing and using appropriate writing strategies are essential steps towards producing pieces of writing which are readable and communicative in nature. Thus, consideration of the perceptions of students regarding writing plays a crucial role in the process of teaching writing. According to the viewpoints of the interviewees, inappropriate methods for teaching writing is one of the issues facing students in academic writing for example:

Participant 3:

'Most of the teachers follow the traditional teaching writing methods. For example they explain for us how to write and asked us to do the same and they

create no motivation for us to write more. We just follow what they said and teach to us.’

- **Insufficient writing practice.**

Practice is very important to learn any skill and if students neglect practising how to write they will never learn to write properly and will not be good at writing. Grabe and Kaplan (1996) believed that writing skill is not acquired naturally, but requires intensive learning and constant practice to develop. Good writers should learn how to convey their ideas clearly for all kinds of audiences and this takes a great deal of practice (Davies, 1998). Thus, according to the interviews lack of practice is considered one of the issues facing students in academic writing. These are some examples, quotations from the interviewees of this study:

Participant 1:

“I think practice is the most important thing in English writing. I think practises are the best so we really need more practises.”

Participant 2:

“Students will not improve in English writing unless they do a lot of practice by themselves and not rely on the teachers. The students need to study hard at home and practice what they have been taught at university.”

Participant 3:

“Honestly, we need a book just for writing practice as a practical course besides the other courses. We really don’t practise English writing and we don’t write in English at all - just a few practices with teachers and do short homework and that is not enough to practise English writing in order to improve writing skill.”

- **Teacher feedback and peer feedback.**

Teacher feedback represents teachers’ comments and corrections on what students write and peer feedback is a technique used to allow students to give comments on each other’s writing. Students tend to work more carefully and with more interest when they know that their work will be checked by the teacher. It is important to give students regular feedback on their writing to know their mistakes and how to correct them. The impact of feedback in general and peer feedback in particular led to students’ greater

command of language (Storch and Tapper (2007). Thus, lack of teacher feedback and peer feedback is one of the issues facing EFL students in academic writing. An example quotation from the interviewees of this study:

Participant 5:

“The large numbers of students in the class prevent the teachers from giving more attention in each student. Also, it is not allowed for the teachers to give each one of the students enough oral or written feedback because the time does not permit them. Honestly, they give us a topic to write about in the class or as a homework as a practice, but they don’t usually give enough feedback. I think that is due to the big number of the students in the class.”

Participant 6:

“I have realised that most of the teachers give us a task to write in class for half an hour which is a short time for students. Then they collect them and consider it as participation and sometimes give us feedback but sometimes give no feedback about what we wrote. Most of the teachers do not give feedback unless you ask them.”

5.3.4 The fourth theme: writing textbooks

The fourth main theme was the English writing textbooks which included inappropriate writing textbooks in the foundation year and inappropriate English writing textbooks in the language department, as sub-themes. These are examples of each of the sub-themes of this theme:

- **Inappropriate writing textbook in the foundation year.**

The main purpose of the foundation year is preparing students for their academic study. Thus, English writing textbooks in the foundation year should provide students with prior knowledge of the different kinds and styles of academic writing they will face in their further academic studies. Students should become accustomed to types of writing they will use in their further academic studies. Therefore, using an inappropriate writing textbook in the foundation year is considered one of the obstacles facing EFL students in Taif University. These are some examples of quotes from the interviewees of this study:

Participant 3:

“I believe that the main problem of English writing started from the foundation year which is the first year at university. In the foundation year we just studied a

few things about English writing for one year and then start studying at the English department with no knowledge about the English writing except only a little general information.”

Participant 6:

“In the foundation year the textbook is for beginners or for a level lower than the beginners and we learn nothing new about English language just the basic information.”

- **Inappropriate writing textbook at the English department.**

Choosing appropriate English writing textbooks to be employed in the language department is crucial. Writing textbooks should meet students' needs based on their level of English language proficiency and gradually expand on what they have already studied about academic writing in the foundation year. However, according to the interviewees of this study, English writing textbooks are inappropriate and do not meet these requirements. These are some examples of quotations from the interviewees regarding inappropriate English writing textbooks used in the foreign language department:

Participant 1:

“I think the textbook is too hard for me and the teacher gave us external information from the internet and other books to simplify and explain different kinds of essay writing.”

Participant 3:

“In the department we start to learn English writing from an advanced level in depth while we already know nothing about English writing and so it is hard for us to catch up with the information we get. Thus, I think there is a huge gap between what we have studied in the foundation year and what we have studied in the English department. In the foundation year the information is too simple and for beginners and in the department the information is too hard and advanced. We entered the department and we have no ideas about different types of essay writing; the organisation of writing and face a massive amount of information about writing. We don't have at least general ideas about them in the foundation year. The teacher gave us another textbook other than the one we officially study because it was not relevant to what we need and the information was not useful and the teacher knows this problem.”

Participant 5:

“we don’t start from scratch or beginner to advanced. They deal with students as if they had already studied good English writing.

Participant 6:

“the English writing textbook in the department is not suitable for the students and is too advanced. How come teachers teach us types of essay writing in one semester only while we don’t know the basic information of English writing and can barely write a few sentences.”

5.3.5 The fifth theme: the contextual issues

The fifth main theme was the contextual issues including sub- themes such as class size, and an insufficient number of English writing courses. These are examples of each of the sub-themes of this theme:

- **Class size.**

Class size means that the class is overloaded with a large number of students. In large classes teachers feel that it is difficult to motivate students and engage their interest (Ballantyne, 2000). It is very difficult for teachers finding sufficient time to concentrate on all the students, for practising writing, giving useful feedback in such class sizes. Class size is considered a serious issue for students in academic writing. Some example quotations from the interviewees are shown:

Participant 3:

“the number of the students in the class is big and gives no opportunity for practise and the teacher will not have enough time to review what all the students wrote and give feedback because of time.”

Participant 5:

“the number of students in the class is big and the teacher is unable to concentrate on each one in the practices and revising of each student’s writing.”

- **Insufficient number of English writing courses.**

The number of English writing courses should be taken into consideration in teaching writing skills. Students need enough courses to be able to improve their writing skills gradually in each year and semester. According to the interviewees of this study, the number of English writing courses allocated is not considered enough and students need

more English writing courses distributed across all academic years. These are examples of quotations from the interviews with participants:

Participant 4:

‘I believe that the English language courses are weak and not enough. Although the students pass the foundation year, they still don’t know how to write well in English and an intensive general English language course should be taught in the first semester or in the first year in the department. This should teach the students the main four skills to prepare the students for more advanced knowledge and studies.’

Participant 6:

‘I hope they increase the number of writing courses and start teaching us gradually from a lower level to a more advanced level.’

5.4 Summary

Five main themes and sub-themes of the qualitative phase I were elaborated in this chapter. These five themes with their sub-themes are English language proficiency, which includes three sub-themes, poor EFL proficiency, lack of vocabulary, prior knowledge of writing styles and organisational structure of English writing. The second theme was the psychological learning theme, which also includes two sub-themes, students’ motivation and writing anxiety. The third theme was the teaching practice theme, which included three sub-issues, using inadequate teaching methods, lack of practice and teacher and peer feedback. The fourth, theme was English writing textbooks. Finally, the last theme was the contextual issues which includes the number of students (class size), and insufficient time for class sessions.

The aforementioned themes led to phase II, which is the quantitative study. A new instrument, as a quantitative questionnaire survey, was developed based on all the aforementioned themes and sub-themes from Phase I. This was utilised in phase II. Details about the quantitative study of phase II will be elaborated in the next chapter.

6 CHAPTER SIX: Phase II, Quantitative Data analysis and findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the quantitative data analysis and results. In this quantitative study a newly developed questionnaire survey was utilised in order to examine and explore the research topic with a larger number of EFL students to be able to generalise the results from the context and also to confirm the result of phase I. The questionnaire survey instrument was developed based on themes which emerged from phase I, which covered all themes and sub- themes of phase I, in addition to demographic items that asked about respondents ages and academic years. Thus, the questionnaire will be used first to conduct quantitative descriptive tests of the demographic findings. The second analysis was factor analysis which was used in order to identify the main factors present in the questionnaire which may then have influenced Saudi EFL students in academic writing. The results of factor analysis are presented in detail, including tables for each factor including the item loadings and the total reliability. Third, cross- tabulations and one way ANOVA statistical tests were used for descriptive analysis to be able to make a comparison between the three academic year groups in order to identify whether or not there were any significant differences between the academic year groups in their perceptions of issues affecting academic writing.

6.2 Demographic Findings

The first two questions of the questionnaire survey were about the demographic characteristics of the participants including ages and academic years. The variable related to academic years of the participants was set both in order to make a comparison between three academic year groups and to obtain data showing potential differences between them, and also to be able to identify which academic group (s) were most influenced in terms of their perceptions of issues in academic writing. The total number of participants was 366 EFL students distributed in three academic years (second year, third year and fourth year). (See. Table 6.1 below).

Table 6. 1: Distribution of sample according to age and academic year (N=366)

Variable	values	No.	%
Age(years)	15 to 19	22	6.0
	20 to 24	317	86.6
	25 to 30	27	7.4
Academic year	year2	126	34.4
	year3	86	23.5
	year4	154	42.1

The highest percentage of the sample (86.6%) was in the age group 20-24 years followed by the age group 25-30 then 15-19. By year groups the largest percentage of the sample (42.1%) was in the fourth year, followed by second year then third year.

6.3 Factor analysis

Factor analysis is a statistical approach used to examine the underlying constructs or components of a questionnaire instrument. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was the appropriate type of factor analysis for this study; it was necessary to check the structure of the questionnaire by assessing the quality of individual items based on the reliability and correlations of each item, or set of items, that might create factors. It was also necessary to eliminate items unrelated to any factors before exploring and extracting factors that might be represented by a set of items. All the items in the survey were entered in the factor analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were conducted to ensure the data met the criteria for conducting factor analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was approximately 0.8 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity resulted in rejecting the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix ($p\text{-value} < 0.0001$). Both of these tests indicated that the data were suitable for factor analysis. After EFA, 26 items were retained for further analysis. Consequently, factor analysis could be performed on the data. Principal Components Analysis, with Varimax rotation was employed to create factors and the suitability of eight, seven, six and five-factor solutions were examined. The five factor solution was the most suitable solution and it was preferred because of its adequate number of primary loadings as well as the sufficient number of items on each factor after the rotation was set only on items above 0.4 and any items with loading below 0.4 were automatically eliminated. Finally, five factors were created, which included 26 items which explained 49.552% of the variance (see following tables).

Table 6. 2: Total Variance Explained

Component	Total Variance Explained								
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	Loadings		Total	% of		Total	% of	
		Variance	Cumulative %		Variance	Cumulative %		Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.683	18.012	18.012	4.683	18.012	18.012	3.615	13.903	13.903
2	2.950	11.345	29.357	2.950	11.345	29.357	2.821	10.849	24.752
3	2.111	8.120	37.477	2.111	8.120	37.477	2.517	9.682	34.433
4	1.738	6.686	44.164	1.738	6.686	44.164	2.170	8.347	42.781
5	1.401	5.389	49.552	1.401	5.389	49.552	1.761	6.771	49.552

The results of the factor analyses are presented in detail in the following output table of Rotated Component Matrix^a.

Table 6. 3: Rotated Component Matrix showing a 5 factor solution

	Rotated Component Matrix ^a				
	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
30.	.715				
55.	.709				
46.	.682				
45.	.654				
50.	.629				
53.	.613				
36.	.606				
27.		.814			
24.		.799			
23.		.756			
14.		.634			
20.		.631			
58.			.701		
42.			.683		
59.			.594		
61.			.587		
33.			.580		
40.			.537		
37.				.767	
54.				.751	
66.				.653	
62.				.648	
5.					.632
8.					.629
9.					.611
10.					.564

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.^a

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table 6. 4: Factor names and variables numbers with reliability

Factors	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Name of factors	English writing textbooks	writing anxiety	Teaching practices	class size	English writing proficiency
No. of items	7	5	6	4	4
Cronbach's α value	.817	.792	.720	.687	.499

The above table shows the name of each factor, the number of items and the scale reliability. It can be seen that the reliability of the five factors ranged from 0.50 to 0.82 which means from average to very good reliability.

Factor 1: English writing textbooks

Table 6. 5: English writing Textbooks: Factor and variables

Factor	Item No.	Items.	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α value
English writing textbooks	30	I think that the English writing skills textbooks employed at the department are difficult for me.	.715	.817
	55	English writing courses do not meet the skills requirements of the English language students.	.709	
	46	The English writing skills textbooks used at the department are above the students' English writing abilities.	.682	
	45	There is a gap between the English writing information in the textbook at the foundation year and the English writing information in the textbook at the foreign languages department.	.654	
	50	I think that the English textbook does not provide students with different writing strategies which are used in university studies.	.629	
	53	The English writing skills textbooks taught at the department do not start gradually from beginners to advanced levels.	.613	
	36	I think that the English textbook in the department is more advanced and complicated.	.606	

According to the results of the factor analysis the table above illustrates that the first factor influencing Saudi EFL students is the English writing Textbooks Curriculum. This factor has the highest Cronbach α 0.817, which is considered very good. The result came out from the responses of 366 participants on 7 items loaded on this first factor. These items reflect the 'English writing Textbooks Curriculum factor'. The most

important item in this factor as revealed by the factor loading is the item ‘‘I think that the English writing skills textbooks taught at the department are difficult for me.’’ with a loading=0.715, followed by the item, ‘‘English writing courses do not meet the skills requirements of the English language students’’ with a loading=0.709. The least important item in this factor was the item ‘‘I think that the English textbook in the department is too advanced and complicated’’ with a loading=0.606.

Factor 2: Writing anxiety

Table 6. 6: Writing anxiety: Factor and variables

Factor	Items. No.	Items.	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α value
writing anxiety	27	I avoid writing because I do not want my classmates to laugh at my mistakes.	.814	.792
	24	I have fear of my English writing being evaluated because of the students' negative comments.	.799	
	23	I avoid writing because I do not want my teachers to criticise me.	.756	
	20	I feel nervous to write in the English language because I think that I will commit mistakes	.634	
	14	I feel nervous when I write in English.	.631	

According to the results of the factor analysis the table above illustrates that the second factor perceived by Saudi EFL students is writing anxiety. This factor has a 0.792 Cronbach α which is very good. The result came from the responses of 366 participants on 5 items loading on this second factor. These items reflect the ‘Writing anxiety factor’. The most important item in this factor is the item, ‘‘I avoid writing because I do not want my classmates to laugh at my mistakes’’ with a loading=0.814, followed by the item, ‘‘I have a fear of my English writing being evaluated because of the students' negative comments’’ with a loading=0.799, while the least important item for the writing anxiety factor was item number 14, which is ‘‘I feel nervous when I write in English.’’ with a loading = 0.631.

Factor 3: The teaching methods and practices

Table 6. 7: The teaching methods practices: Factor and variables

Factor	Items. No.	Items.	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α value
Teaching practices	58	My teachers use up-to-date English writing teaching methods.	.701	.720
	42	The teachers always explain the feedback on my writing explicitly.	.683	
	59	The teacher asks me to correct/edit what my classmates write.	.594	
	61	My English writing improved because of the other unofficial references the teacher gave us.	.587	
	33	The teachers always give feedback on my writing.	.580	
	40	I practise writing at home.	.537	

According to the results of the factor analysis the table above illustrates that the third factor perceived by Saudi EFL students in academic writing is teaching methods and teacher practices. This factor has an alpha of 0.720 which is considered good and acceptable. The result came from the responses of 366 participants on 6 items loaded on this third factor. These items reflect the ‘Teaching methods and teacher practices factor’. The most important item in this factor is item number 58, “My teachers use up-to-date English writing teaching methods.” with a loading =0.701 followed by item 42, “The teachers always explain the feedback on my writing explicitly.” With a loading =0.683 while the least important item from the important items this factor was the item 40, “I practise writing at home.” with a loading=0.537.

Factor 4: Large classes or class size

Table 6. 8: Large classes or class size: Factor and variables

Factor	Items. No.	Items.	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α value
class size	37	Large classes restrict the quality of teacher feedback.	.767	.687
	54.	Large classes mean teachers cannot give equal attention to students.	.751	
	62	Teacher opportunities to provide activities needed by students are limited by large classes.	.653	
	66	I would prefer to study English writing in a small class.	.648	

According to the results of the factor analysis the table above illustrates that the fourth factor perceived by Saudi EFL students in academic writing is class size. This factor has a 0.687 Cronbach α which is considered a good score. The result came from the responses of 366 participants on 4 items loaded on this fourth factor. These items reflect the 'class size factor'. The most important item in this factor is item 37, "Large classes restrict the quality of teacher feedback." with a loading =0.767 followed by the item 54, "Large classes mean teachers cannot give equal attention to students." With a loading =0.751 while the least important item for the class size factor was item, 66 "I would prefer to study English writing in a small class." with a loading=0.648.

Factor 5: English writing proficiency

Table 6. 9: English writing proficiency: Factor and variables

Factor	Items. No.	Items.	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α value
English writing proficiency factor	5	I can write accurately a full composition or essay in English with few grammatical mistakes.	.632	.499
	8	I am able to write an organised composition or essay.	.629	
	9	I can write an accurate full composition or essay in English with few spelling mistakes.	.611	
	10	I have good knowledge about different essay writing styles and structures.	.564	

According to the results of the factor analysis the table above illustrates that the fifth factor perceived by Saudi EFL students in academic writing is English writing proficiency. This factor has a Cronbach's α 0.499 which is an acceptable score. The result came from the responses of 366 participants on 4 items loading on this fifth

factor. These items form the 'English writing proficiency factor'. The most important item in this factor is the item 5, "I can write accurately full composition or essay in English with few grammatical mistakes." with a loading =0.632, followed by item 8, "I am able to write an organised composition or essay." with a loading=0.629, while the least important item for this factor was item number 10, "I have good knowledge about different essays writing styles and structures." With a loading =0.564.

6.4 Descriptive analysis

In this section cross- tabulations and a one way ANOVA test were used for statistical descriptive analysis to be able to make a comparison between the three academic year groups. This is in order to identify whether or not students' perceptions between academic year groups differ across the five factors behind academic writing.

Specifically, a one way ANOVA test is used to know if there is a significant difference between the five factors that students perceive in academic writing. A cross- tabulation statistical test was used in order to make a comparison between the three academic years groups and identify differences among academic year groups by percentages. The comparisons involved scores on 28 items by 366 participants of three academic years studying at the English language department. Some of the participants were studying in the second year majoring (English) at Taif University after finishing the foundation year. The other groups were students in their third academic year and students in the fourth academic year which is the last year for students to graduate. The aim was to compare the responses and issues that the EFL students perceived to be strongest in each of the three academic years (second, third and fourth year) and to be able to see whether or not there were differences between them. The rationale was that some factors might be perceived to have a greater effect on students in the second academic year, for example, but less on students in the fourth year. Thus, the tables below represent the result of the observed frequencies and percentages for each item, elaborating the highest and the lowest frequencies and percentages among the 366 participants.

6.4.1 Cross- Tabulation Statistical Analysis

As stated above, Cross- tabulations were used in order to make a comparison between the three academic year groups.

1) Items of the first factor: English writing textbooks

Items representing the English writing textbooks factor, which is the first factor that students perceived about academic writing in three different academic years, is examined. The following cross tabulation test of these items shows in percentages if there are differences between the three academic year groups or not concerning the influence of the English writing textbooks factor.

Table 6. 10: English writing textbooks

Item 30. I think that the English writing skills textbooks taught at the department are difficult for me.

			disagree	neutral	agree	Total
Academic years	year2	Count	41	25	60	126
		% within Academic years	32.5%	19.8%	47.6%	100.0%
	year3	Count	19	20	47	86
		% within Academic years	22.1%	23.3%	54.7%	100.0%
	year4	Count	44	41	69	154
		% within Academic years	28.6%	26.6%	44.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	104	86	176	366
		% within Academic years	28.4%	23.5%	48.1%	100.0%

The table shows that the highest percentage was reported as 54.7% of EFL students in the third academic year who agreed that English writing skill textbooks taught at the department are difficult for them, while the second year students showed 47.6% of agreement and the fourth year students expressed the lowest percentage of agreement with 44.8%. On the other hand, the highest percentage of students who disagreed with the statement was reported by EFL students of the second year with 32.5% and 28.6% of students in fourth year, while the lowest disagreement percentage was among students of the third year with 22.1%. Overall, the results show that the responses of almost half of students (48.1%) who agreed on this item across all academic year groups were in a similar range of percentages between 44.8% to 54.7%. This indicates a consistency of response among students of all three academic year groups. However, just over a quarter of students (28.4%) disagreed and thought that textbooks taught in the department are not difficult. Therefore, these results support the idea that one of the issues of academic writing facing EFL students is the difficulty of the English writing textbooks, because students in the third and fourth academic years who had already

studied writing skill courses might be expected to be better in English writing skills yet they critically said that the writing skills textbooks curriculum taught in the department are difficult and they were reflecting their actual perceptions of the English writing textbooks they studied. Thus, they are in a position to give general assessments about difficulties of different English writing textbooks rather than students in other academic years. As a consequence, if English writing textbooks are too difficult for students in the last year of their studies, the difficulties will be possibly more on the students in the second year. So, it is necessary that the textbooks should suit the academic level of the students. In order to achieve the improvement of the students' writing skills, the academic writing requirements for the three academic years should reflect a progression in difficulty. In this way they should be able to reach the required level of academic writing ability before they graduate.

Table 6. 11: English writing textbooks

Item 36. I think that the English textbook in the department is too advanced and complicated.

			disagree	neutral	agree	total
Academic years	year2	Count	27	30	69	126
		% within Academic years	21.4%	23.8%	54.8%	100.0%
	year3	Count	15	23	48	86
		% within Academic years	17.4%	26.7%	55.8%	100.0%
	year4	Count	37	45	72	154
		% within Academic years	24.0%	29.2%	46.8%	100.0%
Total	Count	79	98	189	366	
	% within Academic years	21.6%	26.8%	51.6%	100.0%	

The table above illustrated that the highest percentages of the responses of students who agreed that the English textbook in the department is more advanced and complicated occurred in the third year (55.8%) and the second years (54.8%) which represented over half of the students in both academic years while (46.8%) occurred in the fourth year. In contrast, the highest percentages (24.0%) of students who disagreed with the statement was reported in the fourth year followed by students in the second year with 21.4% , while only 17.4% of the students in the third year thought that the English textbook in the department is not more advanced and complicated. Thus, if the perspectives were just those of the students of the second year I could say that they are new students in the department. However, the highest percentage occurred in the students of the third year which means in both third and second years students are facing this issue, followed by

students in the fourth year with percentages close to half of the students (46.8%). Students in the fourth year, who have been exposed to and experienced more English writing and studied more English writing courses in the previous three academic years and are expected to graduate from their current fourth year of study surprisingly, almost half of them thought the English writing textbooks were advanced and complicated. Overall more than half of the students (51.6%) in the three academic year groups agreed with the statement and just less than a quarter (21.6%) of students disagreed with this item which gives a stronger indication that the English textbook in the department is more advanced and complicated for most of the students.

Table 6. 12: English writing textbooks

Item 45. There is a gap between the English writing information in the textbook at the foundation year and the English writing information in the textbook at the foreign languages department.

			disagree	neutral	agree	total
Academic years	year2	Count	11	32	83	126
		% within Academic years	8.7%	25.4%	65.9%	100.0%
	year3	Count	4	12	70	86
		% within Academic years	4.7%	14.0%	81.4%	100.0%
	year4	Count	17	38	99	154
		% within Academic years	11.0%	24.7%	64.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	32	82	252	366
		% within Academic years	8.7%	22.4%	68.9%	100.0%

According to the above table the difference in percentages between the three academic years of study showed that (81.4%) of the students in the third year reported the highest percentages of students who agreed with item 45 (There is a gap between the English writing information in the textbook at the foundation year and the English writing information in the textbook at the foreign languages department) which is a remarkable percentage and 65.9% of the students in the second year similarly 64.3% of the students in the fourth year also supported the statement. With regard to this item, over two thirds of all the students (68.9%) across the three academic years agreed that there was a gap between the information in the English writing textbook in the foundation year and that used in the foreign languages department and only a small percentage (8.7%) of all students disagreed with the statement. Thus, textbooks of English academic writing in the foundation need to be changed according to suit the students' academic needs to be beneficial for them in their further academic studies in different majors in general and for the students who intend to specialise in English language studies in particular.

Table 6. 13: English writing textbooks

Item 46. The English writing skills textbooks used at the department are above the students' English writing abilities.

		disagree	neutral	agree	total	
Academic years	year2	Count	26	24	76	126
		% within Academic years	20.6%	19.0%	60.3%	100.0%
	year3	Count	12	21	53	86
		% within Academic years	14.0%	24.4%	61.6%	100.0%
	year4	Count	32	39	83	154
		% within Academic years	20.8%	25.3%	53.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	70	84	212	366
		% within Academic years	19.1%	23.0%	57.9%	100.0%

The above table illustrates that the highest percentage of students who agreed with item 46 reported similarly in both the third year and the second year where in both cases over 3/5 of students agreed that the writing textbooks used in the department are above the students' writing abilities. In contrast, the highest percentage (20.8%) of disagreement on item 46 was reported by the respondents of the students of the fourth year. Thus, the overall result of participants who agreed with the statement in all the academic years were (57.9%) which, indicated that English writing skills textbooks used at the department are above their English writing abilities. This could be because they just studied basic general English writing information in the foundation year while they actually required more academic writing skills than they were taught in the foundation year. Surprisingly even students in the fourth year who studied advanced English writing in the department think that English writing skills textbooks are above the students' English writing abilities. This is after they have studied all the English writing courses and are supposed to have a good ability in academic English writing skills. Yet they still consider academic writing textbooks above their English writing abilities despite the fact that they are more exposed to English writing and have practiced more writing in their academic studies.

Table 6. 14: English writing textbooks

Item 50. I think that the English textbook does not provide students with different writing strategies which are used in university studies.

		disagree	neutral	agree	total	
Academic years	year2	Count	18	32	76	126
		% within Academic years	14.3%	25.4%	60.3%	100.0%
	year3	Count	8	18	60	86
		% within Academic years	9.3%	20.9%	69.8%	100.0%
	year4	Count	19	33	102	154
		% within Academic years	12.3%	21.4%	66.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	45	83	238	366
		% within Academic years	12.3%	22.7%	65.0%	100.0%

The above table illustrated the different percentages of the 366 participants across the three different academic years. The highest percentage (69.8%) of students who agreed that the English textbook does not provide students with different writing strategies which are used in university studies was reported by students of the third year followed by (66.2%) of students of the fourth and the lowest percentage was in the students of the second year with (60.3%). Overall, just under two thirds of all the students (65.0%) agreed that the English textbook does not provide students with different writing strategies which are used in university studies however, just (12.3%) of all students disagreed with this item. Data in this table suggests that students do not think they study different academic writing strategies while they are required to use different styles of academic writing in their further academic studies thus, they are facing difficulties answering written questions which require specific writing styles. In other words, if they do not know different styles of academic writing they could not answer questions that required descriptive explanations or argumentative explanations or the answer required for any other kinds of academic writing. Thus, people who are in charge and responsible for academic writing textbooks need to take into consideration what kinds of academic writing styles students will need and use in their academic studies.

Table 6. 15: English writing textbooks

Item 53. The English writing skills textbooks taught at the department do not start gradually from beginners to advanced levels.

			disagree	neutral	agree	total
Academic years	year2	Count	14	22	90	126
		% within Academic years	11.1%	17.5%	71.4%	100.0%
	year3	Count	12	19	55	86
		% within Academic years	14.0%	22.1%	64.0%	100.0%
	year4	Count	27	30	97	154
		% within Academic years	17.5%	19.5%	63.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	53	71	242	366
		% within Academic years	14.5%	19.4%	66.1%	100.0%

The above table showed that most of the students in the second academic year (71.4%) agreed that the English writing skills textbooks taught at the department do not start gradually from a beginner's level and move on to advanced levels. In a similar way, students in the third and fourth years also reported that they considered this item as representing an obstacle when they were facing tasks in academic writing. This table reported that there is a gradual decrease of the percentages of students who agreed with statements in each academic year groups 71.4%, 64.0%, and 63.0%. Thus, there is consistency in the responses and 2/3rds of the students' overall thought that the English writing skills textbooks taught at the department do not start gradually from beginners to advanced levels. This means most of the students complained that the English writing textbooks are too difficult and above their academic level, even students in the fourth year.

Table 6. 16: English writing textbooks

Item 55. English writing courses do not meet the skills requirements of the English language students.

		disagree	neutral	agree	total	
Academic years	year2	Count	23	31	72	126
		% within Academic years	18.3%	24.6%	57.1%	100.0%
	year3	Count	9	21	56	86
		% within Academic years	10.5%	24.4%	65.1%	100.0%
	year4	Count	27	39	88	154
		% within Academic years	17.5%	25.3%	57.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	59	91	216	366
		% within Academic years	16.1%	24.9%	59.0%	100.0%

The above table shows that the highest percentage (65.1%) of students who agreed that English writing courses do not meet the skills requirements of the English language students occurred in third year and (57.1%) were reported among the students in both the second and fourth years. Thus, I believe that because more than half of the participants (59.0%) in the three entire academic years agree that the courses do not satisfy their academic needs, therefore the number of academic writing courses and textbooks of English academic writing in those courses should be reviewed and changed accordingly. This might satisfy the students in order to develop and improve their skills while they are studying in the department.

The overall explanations of results of cross tabs for factor 1, English writing textbooks:

From the overall analyses of the seven cross tabulations items 30, 36, 45, 46, 50, 53 and 55 there are some interesting points emerging from viewing all the seven items as a group which represented factor 1 (English writing textbooks).

First, more than 2/3 of students in 4 items and more than half of students in the other two items agreed that English writing textbooks are considered as one of the writing skill issues facing EFL students. This indicates that there is a degree of consistency between the percentages between year groups with only slight increases or decreases in a range of less than 10%. This shows that this factor affects all students in different academic years and there is no gradual progression between the year groups, whereas progress is normally expected between year groups, especially students in year 3 or year4. However, only item 53 represented a gradual progression between year groups

where (71.4%) of second year students agreed that ‘English writing skills textbooks taught at the department do not start gradually from beginners to advanced levels’, slightly decreased in students of third year (64.0 %) and fourth year (63.0 %). Finally, almost half of students (48.1%) to two thirds of students (68.9 %) agreed that there is an issue facing them in the textbooks taught in the foundation year and in the department.

2) Items of the second factor: English writing anxiety

The English writing anxiety factor is the second factor that students perceive to be important in the academic writing of the students in three different academic years. A cross tabulation of these items shows in percentages whether or not there are any differences in the perceptions of the English writing anxiety factor across the three academic year groups.

Table 6. 17: Factor 2, English writing anxiety

			disagree	neutral	agree	total
Academic years	year2	Count	36	34	56	126
		% within Academic years	28.6%	27.0%	44.4%	100.0%
	year3	Count	29	12	45	86
		% within Academic years	33.7%	14.0%	52.3%	100.0%
	year4	Count	52	31	71	154
		% within Academic years	33.8%	20.1%	46.1%	100.0%
Total	Count	117	77	172	366	
	% within Academic years	32.0%	21.0%	47.0%	100.0%	

Regarding item 20 as we can see in the above table (52.3%) of students in the third year agreed with item 20 which was the highest percentage between the three academic years followed by students in the fourth year with 46.1% and 44.4% of students in the second year believe that they will feel nervous when writing in the English language because they think that they will commit mistakes. In contrast, equally almost 34% of students in both the fourth and third years did not agree with the statement and the lowest percentages of the students who did not feel nervous about writing in English, were among students of the second year with 28.6%. Thus, I think that this item indicated that writing anxiety is one of the issues that EFL students encountered in academic writing. A noticeable feature in this table is that the percentages reported for both agree and disagree are fairly consistent between year groups. Therefore, teachers should

encourage students to write more even if they make mistakes and provide them with more writing exercises and more practices with extra marks as a kind of motivation and let them believe that there is no harm in making mistakes and we learn from our mistakes.

Table 6. 18: Factor 2, English writing anxiety

Item 14. I feel nervous when I write in English.

			disagree	neutral	agree	total
Academic years	year2	Count	60	31	35	126
		% within Academic years	47.6%	24.6%	27.8%	100.0%
	year3	Count	37	29	20	86
		% within Academic years	43.0%	33.7%	23.3%	100.0%
	year4	Count	77	34	43	154
		% within Academic years	50.0%	22.1%	27.9%	100.0%
Total	Count	174	94	98	366	
	% within Academic years	47.5%	25.7%	26.8%	100.0%	

The table shows that (50.0%) of the respondents of students in the fourth year disagreed with item 14 and almost half of the students do not feel nervous when they write in English which is the highest frequency disagreement followed by (47.6%) of students in the second year and (43.0%) of students in the third year. In contrast, most of those who agreed with the statement were the students of the fourth and second years with (27.9%, 27.8%) while the lowest percentage agreeing that they feel nervous when they write in English was reported in the third year with (23.3%) which means that around a quarter of the students in all academic years felt nervous when they write in English. Thus almost half of the students in the three entire academic years do not feel nervous when they write in English and around a quarter of the students in all academic years felt nervous when they write in English. Thus, writing anxiety is an issue facing some of the EFL students in academic writing for a quarter of students in the three academic years.

Table 6. 19: Factor 2, English writing anxiety**Item 23. I avoid writing because I do not want my teachers to criticise me.**

			disagree	neutral	agree	total
Academic years	year2	Count	65	32	29	126
		% within Academic years	51.6%	25.4%	23.0%	100.0%
	year3	Count	40	18	28	86
		% within Academic years	46.5%	20.9%	32.6%	100.0%
	year4	Count	78	35	41	154
		% within Academic years	50.6%	22.7%	26.6%	100.0%
Total	Count	183	85	98	366	
	% within Academic years	50.0%	23.2%	26.8%	100.0%	

The table above illustrated that the highest percentage (51.6%) was reported in students of second year who disagreed with item 23 that they avoid writing because they do not want teachers to criticise them. Similarly, (50.6%) of students in the fourth year disagreed as well while, (46.5%) of students in the third year disagreed with statement. Generally almost 50% of students in each academic group disagreed that that they avoid writing because they do not want teachers to criticise them. In contrast, (32.6%) more than quarter of students in the third year agreed that they avoid writing because they do not want teachers to criticise them and surprisingly (29.6%) of the student in the fourth year did so as well. While, (23.0%) of the students of the second year agreed with this statement. Because a quarter of the participants (26.8%) agreed that they avoid writing because they do not want teachers to criticise them and the last quarter of the respondents (23.2%) had not decided whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, the issue of writing anxiety is considered an issue facing EFL students. It is not surprising that the highest percentage of disagreement with statements occurred with students of the fourth year because they have been exposed to more English writing and have practiced more writing. Thus, they have more experience and that is why they are less nervous about committing any writing mistakes and are mature enough to accept any criticism from the teachers. Thus, I believe that an issue like avoiding writing because students do not want teachers to criticise them has to be taken into consideration and students have to know that any feedback and criticism regarding their writing will benefit them through knowing their mistakes and how to correct them when they write again and so learn from their mistakes.

Table 6. 20: Factor 2, English writing anxiety

Item 24. I have fear of my English writing being evaluated because of the students' negative comments.

		disagree	neutral	agree	total	
Academic years	year2	Count	78	22	26	126
		% within Academic years	61.9%	17.5%	20.6%	100.0%
	year3	Count	49	14	23	86
		% within Academic years	57.0%	16.3%	26.7%	100.0%
	year4	Count	92	24	38	154
		% within Academic years	59.7%	15.6%	24.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	219	60	87	366
		% within Academic years	59.8%	16.4%	23.8%	100.0%

The above table illustrates that (61.9%) of the students in the second year which is the highest percentage disagreed that they have fear of their English writing being evaluated because of the students' negative comments followed by (59.7%) of students in the fourth year and the lowest percentage occurred in the students of the third year with (57.0%) which indicated that more than 50% students in all three academic groups disagreed with statement. In contrast, the highest percentage (26.7%) of agreement on item 24 occurred with the respondents of the students of the third year and the lowest percentage occurred with students of the second year with (20.6%). While (59.8%) of the total students have no fear of their English writing being evaluated because of the students' negative comments, but (23.8%) of the total students fear their English writing being evaluated because of the students' negative comments and (16.4%) did not want to say whether they fear their English writing being evaluated or not.

Table 6. 21: Factor 2, English writing anxiety**Item 27. I avoid writing because I do not want my classmates to laugh at my mistakes.**

			disagree	neutral	agree	total
Academic years	year2	Count	85	26	15	126
		% within Academic years	67.5%	20.6%	11.9%	100.0%
	year3	Count	55	13	18	86
		% within Academic years	64.0%	15.1%	20.9%	100.0%
	year4	Count	107	13	34	154
		% within Academic years	69.5%	8.4%	22.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	247	52	67	366
		% within Academic years	67.5%	14.2%	18.3%	100.0%

According to the above table, the different percentages between the three academic years of study show that the highest percentage (69.5%) of students disagreeing were in the fourth year. (67.5%) of the students in the second year disagreed while students in the third year reported the lowest disagreement among respondents with (64.0%). Accordingly, most of the students disagreed that they avoid writing because they do not want their classmates to laugh at their mistakes .On the other hand, (22.1%) of students in the fourth year agreed with the statement followed by (20.9%) students in the third year and the lowest percentages of students who agreed that they avoid writing because they do not want their classmates to laugh at their mistakes occurred with the students of the second year with (11.9%). This shows that most of the students did not avoid writing because they do not want their classmates to laugh at their mistakes. However (18.3%), about a fifth of the students in the department, avoid writing because they do not want their classmates to laugh at their mistakes and this should be taken into consideration. Students should be encouraged not to pay attention to any negative criticism from students and realise that there is no harm in making mistakes since we learn from our mistakes.

The overall explanations of results of cross tabs for factor 2, Anxiety:

When the five cross tabulations for items 14, 20, 23, 24 and 27 are considered there are some interesting points which begin to emerge from viewing all five analyses as a group. First, there is a degree of consistency between the percentages between year groups. This seems surprising and interesting in that there does not appear to be a great deal of change or progression between the year groups. The same issues seem to affect students whether they are reporting from year 2 or year 4. Normally, the expectation

would be that there should be progress or at least change between year groups. These data broadly suggest that this is not the case.

Secondly, the one clear instance where there is a difference between year groups comes with responses to item 27 where second year students' agreement about being concerned about their fellow student laughing at them is only 11% but in year three, this almost doubles to 20.9%. The possible expectation would have been that with increasing practice and confidence, these percentages would be the other way round, i.e. that with greater familiarity with the subject, students' fear of being laughed at should decrease. These results are somewhat unexpected and will be commented on further in the final recommendations of the thesis.

Third, the proportions of students agreeing with the items about anxiety are for four of these five items, in the range of one fifth (20%) to a quarter (25%) with the exception of item 20 where they were asked about anxiety related to making mistakes. Here the percentage almost doubled to just less than 50%. This would seem to suggest that students are anxious about making mistakes, i.e. that they have a concern to get things right if they can. Now this may also link up with items relating to language proficiency (see below).

3) Items of the third factor: English writing teaching practises

Items representing the factor relating to English writing teaching methods and practises is the third factor that relates to the academic writing of the students in three different academic years. A cross tabulation of these items shows in percentages whether or not there are any differences perceived between the three academic year groups of the influences of the English writing teaching methods and practices factor.

Table 6. 22: Factor 3, English writing teaching practices

Item 33. The teachers always give feedback on my writing.

			disagree	neutral	agree	total
Academic years	year2	Count	72	35	19	126
		% within Academic years	57.1%	27.8%	15.1%	100.0%
	year3	Count	46	18	22	86
		% within Academic years	53.5%	20.9%	25.6%	100.0%
	year4	Count	81	36	37	154
		% within Academic years	52.6%	23.4%	24.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	199	89	78	366	
	% within Academic years	54.4%	24.3%	21.3%	100.0%	

The table shows that the highest Percentage was reported as 57.1% of EFL students in the second academic year who disagreed with item 33 and think teachers do not give feedback on their writing while the third year students showed 53.5% of disagreement and the fourth year students expressed the lowest frequency percentage with 52.6% which generally showed that more than half of the students in the three academic groups agreed that ‘teachers do not always give feedback on my writing’. On the other hand, the highest percentage of students who agreed that teachers always give feedback on their writing was reported by EFL students in the third year with 25.6%, also 24.0% of students in the fourth year while the lowest percentage (15.1%) of agreement was reported by students in the second year. Overall, the noticeable feature in this table is that the percentages reported for both agree and disagree are fairly consistent between year groups. I believe that teachers may not give feedback on students’ writing for many reasons. One of the reasons could be the class size which is between 40 to 70 students in each class thus, teachers could not manage to give feedback on students’ assignments and explain this in a new lesson in a class of a large number of students. That could be because the time limit of the lesson did not give teacher the opportunity to write feedback to large number of students. Also, students might not care to ask the teacher for feedback regarding their writing.

Table 6. 23: English writing teaching practices**Item 40. I practice writing at home.**

			disagree	neutral	agree	total
Academic years	year2	Count	66	36	24	126
		% within Academic years	52.4%	28.6%	19.0%	100.0%
	year3	Count	42	28	16	86
		% within Academic years	48.8%	32.6%	18.6%	100.0%
	year4	Count	89	35	30	154
		% within Academic years	57.8%	22.7%	19.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	197	99	70	366
		% within Academic years	53.8%	27.0%	19.1%	100.0%

As we can see in the above table more than half of students in all academic year groups reported that they did not practice writing at home. Specifically, 57.8% of students in the fourth year did not practice writing at home which was the highest frequency percentage between the three academic years followed by students in the second year with 52.4% and 48.8% in the students in the third year as well. On the other hand, the highest frequency percentage 19.5% for participants who agreed with variable 40 (I practice writing at home) was reported in students of the fourth year. The overall analysis of this table shows that all the percentages reported for both ‘agree’ and ‘disagree’ are fairly consistent between year groups and this factor affected almost equally on year2, year 3 and year 4, suggesting there is no progress regarding writing practices at home over the three academic years. Thus, I believe that students facing issues in practising writing at home could be because there is no homework given to them to practice writing at home. However, students in the fourth year ought to be mature enough to practice writing at home and to be more committed to improving their academic writing because they are required to do more writing in their exams to be able to pass their courses successfully and graduate with at least an acceptable level of academic writing as English teachers in the future.

Table 6. 24: Factor 3, English writing teaching practices**Item 42. The teachers always explain the feedback on my writing explicitly.**

			disagree	neutral	agree	total
Academic years	year2	Count	75	37	14	126
		% within Academic years	59.5%	29.4%	11.1%	100.0%
	year3	Count	47	21	18	86
		% within Academic years	54.7%	24.4%	20.9%	100.0%
	year4	Count	77	44	33	154
		% within Academic years	50.0%	28.6%	21.4%	100.0%
Total	Count	199	102	65	366	
	% within Academic years	54.4%	27.9%	17.8%	100.0%	

According to the above table of the different percentages among the three academic years of this study, 59.5% of the students in the second year reported the highest disagreement with item 42 (The teachers always explain the feedback on my writing explicitly) followed by students in the third year with 54.7% while the lowest percentages of disagreement occurred with in students of the fourth year with of 50.0%. This shows that the disagreement of students on the items gradually decreased showing that in each following year teachers slightly explain the ‘feedback on my writing’ explicitly more than the year before. In contrast, there is a similar percentage of the responses of students in the fourth year 21.4% and students in the third year with 20.9% who agreed with this statement and only 11.1% of students in the second year think that the teachers always explain the feedback on my writing explicitly. Thus, teachers should explain their comments and their corrections of the students writing in order to enable the students to know their mistakes, how to avoid them, and how to fix them when they write.

Table 6. 25: Factor 3, English writing teaching practices**Item 58. My teachers use up-to-date English writing teaching methods.**

			disagree	neutral	agree	total
Academic years	year2	Count	72	31	23	126
		% within Academic years	57.1%	24.6%	18.3%	100.0%
	year3	Count	51	17	18	86
		% within Academic years	59.3%	19.8%	20.9%	100.0%
	year4	Count	84	40	30	154
		% within Academic years	54.5%	26.0%	19.5%	100.0%
Total	Count	207	88	71	366	
	% within Academic years	56.6%	24.0%	19.4%	100.0%	

The above table illustrates that 59.3% which is the highest percentage of the students in the third year disagreed that teachers use up-to-date English writing teaching methods followed by students of the second year with 57.1 % of disagreement and the lowest percentage occurred with students in the fourth year who reported 54.5%. This is a fairly consistent result across all three years. In contrast, the highest percentage (20.9%) of agreement on item 58 was reported by students of the third year followed by students of the fourth year with 19.5% and the lowest percentage occurred in the second year with 18.3%. Overall, students believed that teachers did not use up-to-date English writing teaching methods. A remarkably consistent percentage was reported for both ‘agree’ and ‘disagree’ between year groups for this item which indicated that this occurred in all the three academic year groups. Thus, a traditional approach just teaching students how to write by telling them and letting them imitate it as a way of writing might not motivate or suit the students.

Table 6. 26: Factor 3, English writing teaching practices**Item 59. The teacher asks me to correct/edit what my classmates write.**

		disagree	neutral	agree	total	
Academic years	year2	Count	94	25	7	126
		% within Academic years	74.6%	19.8%	5.6%	100.0%
	year3	Count	55	17	14	86
		% within Academic years	64.0%	19.8%	16.3%	100.0%
	year4	Count	81	30	43	154
		% within Academic years	52.6%	19.5%	27.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	230	72	64	366
		% within Academic years	62.8%	19.7%	17.5%	100.0%

The above table illustrates the percentage of 366 participants in three different academic years responding, clarifying the highest and lowest percentage among the three groups on item 59 which is (The teacher asks me to correct/edit what my classmates write). Thus, the highest percentage (74.6%) of students who disagreed with item 59 that (The teacher asks me to correct/edit what my classmates write) which was reported by students of the second year followed by (64.0%) of students of the third year and the lowest percentage of disagreement was in the students of the fourth year with (52.6%). This indicates that there is a decline in the percentage of students disagreeing with this item as they progress through the academic years and that by the fourth year just over a quarter of the students indicate that they are doing some peer feedback. In contrast, the highest percentage of students who agreed with statement was (27.9%) of the fourth year students followed by (16.3%) of the third year students and finally only (5.6%) of the second year students which indicates an increase in the percentage of students agreeing with this statement as they progressed through the academic years. Thus, what is interesting in this table is that there is a decline in the percentage of students disagreeing with this item as they progress through the academic years and that by the fourth year just over a quarter of the students indicate that they are doing some peer feedback. Thus, I believe that while more than half of the total number of the participants (62.8%) disagreed with the statement and less than fifth of participants 17.5% agreed with the statement, this indicates that teachers may need to take into consideration what peer feedback is. As one of the different up-to-date teaching writing strategies, it might work with the students and improve their writing beside other teaching writing strategies.

Table 6. 27: Factor 3, English writing teaching practices

Item 61. My English writing improved because of the other unofficial references the teacher gave us.

		disagree	neutral	agree	total	
Academic years	year2	Count	52	44	30	126
		% within Academic years	41.3%	34.9%	23.8%	100.0%
	year3	Count	23	30	33	86
		% within Academic years	26.7%	34.9%	38.4%	100.0%
	year4	Count	65	40	49	154
		% within Academic years	42.2%	26.0%	31.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	140	114	112	366
		% within Academic years	38.3%	31.1%	30.6%	100.0%

The above table shows that in comparison between the academic year groups the highest percentage of students who disagreed with this statement were the students of the fourth year with 42.2% and 41.3% were from the students in the third year followed by 26.7 % of the second year students who do not think that their English writing improved because of the other unofficial references the teacher gave them. In contrast, most of those who agreed with the statement were the students of the third year with 38.4% followed by the fourth year students with 31.8% of agreement on the statement while 23.8% of second year students who thought that their English writing did not improve because of the other unofficial references the teacher gave them. Responses from each of the three year groups were fairly equally divided with around a third agreeing, a third neutral and a third disagreeing with this item. Therefore, the foreign language department has to either revise the textbooks for English writing to make them more suitable for the students and satisfy what the students need in order to improve their writing, or to give the teachers the opportunity to choose the textbook or other suitable material accordingly.

The overall explanations of results of cross tabs for factor 3, teaching practices:

The overall analysis of the results of six cross tabulations items 33, 40, 42, 58, 59 and 61 as a group which represented teaching practices factor showed some interesting points. The total results for each of the six items shows agreement among most of the students in the three academic year groups that teaching practices including using inappropriate teaching methods, insufficient writing practices and lack of teachers' and peers' feedback are issues facing them in academic writing.

In this factor, four items out of six showed remarkably consistent percentages reported for both ‘agree’ and ‘disagree’ between year groups which indicated that teachers are doing more or less the same things regardless of which year group they are teaching. The possibility that teachers may be employing essentially the same teaching methods in all three year groups may also be linked to the factor of the ‘English writing textbook’ and its content.

4) Items of the fourth factor: English writing class size factor

These 4 items represented the contextual: English writing class size factor which is the fourth factor that the students in three different academic years identified in relation to academic writing.

Table 6. 28: Factor 4, English writing class size

Item 37. Large classes restrict the quality of teacher feedback.

			disagree	neutral	agree	total
Academic years	year2	Count	17	24	85	126
		% within Academic years	13.5%	19.0%	67.5%	100.0%
	year3	Count	2	29	55	86
		% within Academic years	2.3%	33.7%	64.0%	100.0%
	year4	Count	13	35	106	154
		% within Academic years	8.4%	22.7%	68.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	32	88	246	366
		% within Academic years	8.7%	24.0%	67.2%	100.0%

The above table shows that most of those who agreed with the statement were among the students of the fourth year 68.8% while, 67.5% were among the students in the second year and 64.0% of those who agreed that ‘Large classes restrict the quality of teacher feedback’ were from the students in the third year. This is a consistent picture emerging across all three years. In contrast, most of those who disagreed with the statement were from the students of the second year 13.5% followed by the students of the fourth year 8.4% while only 2.3% of those who disagreed with the statement were from the students of the third year. Thus, I believe that while more than two thirds of the participants in the three entire academic years 67.2% agreed which is a high percentage, gives a strong indication that ‘Large classes really do restrict the quality of teacher feedback’. Thus, the foreign languages department should take into consideration the number of students in the class as an obstacle facing the students in learning academic writing and should minimize the number of the students in the class

giving the teacher the opportunity to revise and explain accurately to the students the comments and feedback on their writing.

Table 6. 29: Factor 4, English writing class size

Item 54. Large classes mean teachers cannot give equal attention to students.

		disagree	neutral	agree	total	
Academic years	year2	Count	12	18	96	126
		% within Academic years	9.5%	14.3%	76.2%	100.0%
	year3	Count	5	14	67	86
		% within Academic years	5.8%	16.3%	77.9%	100.0%
	year4	Count	22	20	112	154
		% within Academic years	14.3%	13.0%	72.7%	100.0%
Total	Count	39	52	275	366	
	% within Academic years	10.7%	14.2%	75.1%	100.0%	

The table shows that the highest percentage was reported as 77.9% of EFL students in the third academic year who agreed that large classes meant teachers cannot give equal attention to students while the second year students showed 76.2% of agreement on the statement and the fourth years students expressed the lowest agreement of the statement with 72.7% and in the sample overall just over three quarters of the students agreed with this item. On the other hand, the highest percentage of students who disagreed with this statement was reported by students of the fourth year as 14.3% and 9.5% of students of the second year while the lowest percentage occurred in students of the third year with 5.8%. Thus, I believe that one of the difficulties of academic writing facing EFL students is truly the large number of students in a class which is consistently reported by students across all three academic years. Thus, it prevents the teachers giving equal attention to students to practice, to revise with the teachers and ask about whatever they do not understand and need more explanation. Furthermore, large classes restrict the quality of teacher and peer feedback and applying any other newer teaching strategies to teach writing skills. Thus, the department should be aware of the class size issue and try to minimise the number of students in the class which as a result would give the teachers the opportunity to pay equal attention to students to practise more and enable the teachers to apply any writing process strategies.

Table 6. 30: Factor 4, English writing class size**Item 62. Teacher opportunities to provide activities needed by students are limited by large classes.**

			disagree	neutral	agree	total
Academic years	year2	Count	19	30	77	126
		% within Academic years	15.1%	23.8%	61.1%	100.0%
	year3	Count	8	23	55	86
		% within Academic years	9.3%	26.7%	64.0%	100.0%
	year4	Count	20	34	100	154
		% within Academic years	13.0%	22.1%	64.9%	100.0%
Total	Count	47	87	232	366	
	% within Academic years	12.8%	23.8%	63.4%	100.0%	

As we can see in the above table 64.9% of students in the fourth year agreed that ‘Teacher opportunities to provide activities needed by students are limited by large classes’ which was the highest percentage between the three academic years followed by students in the third year with 64.0% while the lowest frequency percentage were in students of the second year with 61.1%. On the other hand, the highest percentage 15.1% for participants who disagreed with variable 62 (Teacher opportunities to provide activities needed by students are limited by large classes) was reported in students of the second year followed by 13.0% of students in the fourth year and finally the lowest frequency percentage of students who disagreed was reported by third year students with 9.3%. Thus, in recognition of the consistent picture emerging from these data, the English language department should limit the number of students in each class thereby enabling the teachers to have the opportunities to provide the activities needed by students. This would also give the students more time for writing practices and the opportunity for equal attention from the teachers.

Table 6. 31: Factor 4, English writing class size**Item 66. I would prefer to study English writing in a small class.**

			disagree	neutral	agree	total
Academic years	year2	Count	11	15	100	126
		% within Academic years	8.7%	11.9%	79.4%	100.0%
	year3	Count	5	12	69	86
		% within Academic years	5.8%	14.0%	80.2%	100.0%
	year4	Count	14	21	119	154
		% within Academic years	9.1%	13.6%	77.3%	100.0%
Total	Count		30	48	288	366
	% within Academic years		8.2%	13.1%	78.7%	100.0%

The above table showed that the highest percentage (80.2%) of participants who would prefer to study English writing in a small class was reported by the students of the third year followed by (79.4%) of the second year students and the lowest percentage occurred in the students of the fourth year with (77.3%). This means students are aware that large class sizes can cause many learning difficulties.

The overall explanations of results of cross tabs for factor 4, class size:

The overall results and analyses of the four cross tabulations of items 37, 54, 62, 46 and 66 shows that there are some interesting points emerging from viewing all the four items as a group which represented factor 4, (English writing class size).

First all the four items show that more than 2/3 of students agreed that class size is considered one of the writing skill issues potentially hindering EFL students. Secondly, there is a notable degree of consistency of the agreement percentages between year groups and most of the students agreed that class size is considered as an obstacle in academic writing preventing them from obtaining more opportunity to practise writing as well as getting teacher and peer feedback. This may also link up with items relating to teaching practices factor.

5) Items of the fifth factor: English writing proficiency factor

4 items represented the ‘English writing proficiency’ factor which is the fifth factor that students in three different academic years identified as influential in academic writing. A cross tabulation of these items shows in percentages whether or not there are interesting differences in the perceptions of the influence of the English language proficiency factor among the three academic year groups.

Table 6. 32: Factor 5, English writing proficiency factor

Item 5. I can write accurately a full composition and essay in English with grammatical mistakes.

			disagree	neutral	agree	total
Academic years	year2	Count	31	22	73	126
		% within Academic years	24.6%	17.5%	57.9%	100.0%
	year3	Count	11	21	54	86
		% within Academic years	12.8%	24.4%	62.8%	100.0%
	year4	Count	32	36	86	154
		% within Academic years	20.8%	23.4%	55.8%	100.0%
Total	Count	74	79	213	366	
	% within Academic years	20.2%	21.6%	58.2%	100.0%	

The table above illustrated that 62.8% of students in the third year agreed that they can write accurately a full composition and essay in English with grammatical mistakes. This was the highest percentage between the three academic years followed by students in the second year with 57.9% and 55.8% of the students in the fourth year who agreed with statement. This indicates that most of the students in the three academic years (more than 50%) agreed that they have grammatical issues while they were writing compositions and essays in English. On the other hand, the highest percentage 24.6% for participants who disagreed with item 5 (I can write accurately a full composition and essay in English with grammatical mistakes) was reported in students of the second year followed by the disagreement of students in the fourth year with 20.8% and the lowest percentage 12.8% who disagreed was students of the third year. There are a remarkably consistent percentages reported for the agree responses between year groups which indicated that there might be little or no change or progression occurring in all the three academic year groups which would normally be expected in at least year 3 or year 4. These issues were prevalent in all three academic year groups whether they are in year 2 or year 3 or year 4. Thus, students studying English linguistics and literature are supposed to be good at English and especially students who are in the fourth year. Their English writing is supposed to be very good as they have been exposed to and

experienced more with English writing throughout their previous academic years. They have completed more writing courses before so their English language in general is supposed to be up to the level of students who will graduate as English teachers at the end of their fourth year. A concern, therefore, is that only 55% of respondents agreed about this specific item.

Table 6. 33: Factor 5, English writing proficiency factor

Item 8. I am able to write an organised composition and essay.

		disagree	neutral	agree	total	
Academic years	year2	Count	37	40	49	126
		% within Academic years	29.4%	31.7%	38.9%	100.0%
	year3	Count	29	23	34	86
		% within Academic years	33.7%	26.7%	39.5%	100.0%
	year4	Count	57	47	50	154
		% within Academic years	37.0%	30.5%	32.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	123	110	133	366
		% within Academic years	33.6%	30.1%	36.3%	100.0%

This table suggests a fairly consistent picture between the views of the students of differing years on their perceptions of their ability to write an organised composition and essay. Across the sample around a third of students were indicating that they disagreed with the item and thus were claiming that they could not write an organised composition or essay. Of more concern is the matter that only a third felt they could agree with this statement and that there was little progression and improvement in their perceptions across the three years. The difference between what the fourth years were reporting and that of the second years is very little. Surely after three years of study, it is to be hoped that there would or should be some improvement in their writing.

The overall totals for each response option were closely bordering around one third for each, that is disagree, agree and neutral. In terms of the students perceived ability to ‘write an organised composition or essay’ the concern is that only around a third felt able to do this and that this was fairly consistent across the three year groups, with the lowest agreement from fourth year students, who one would have hoped, ought to be the highest. Accordingly, the issue of the knowledge of different writing organising and writing structures should be taken into consideration and the teachers and the department should be aware of it.

Table 6. 34: Factor 5, English writing proficiency factor**Item 9. I can write an accurate full composition and essay in English with few spelling mistakes.**

			disagree	neutral	agree	total
Academic years	year2	Count	43	25	58	126
		% within Academic years	34.1%	19.8%	46.0%	100.0%
	year3	Count	32	24	30	86
		% within Academic years	37.2%	27.9%	34.9%	100.0%
	year4	Count	45	50	59	154
		% within Academic years	29.2%	32.5%	38.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	120	99	147	366	
	% within Academic years	32.8%	27.0%	40.2%	100.0%	

The above table illustrates that 46.0% of the students in the second year, which is the highest percentage, agreed that they can write an accurate, full composition and essay in English with few spelling mistakes followed by students in the fourth year who reported 38.3% of agreement and the lowest percentage occurred with the students of the third year with 34.9%. In contrast, the highest percentage 37.2% of disagreement on item 9 was reported by the respondents of the students of the third year and the lowest percentage occurred in the third year with 29.2% who disagreed that they could write an accurate full composition or essay in English with few spelling mistakes. Basically, a third of the students responding were indicating that they did not think that they could write with few spelling mistakes. Thus, EFL language proficiency is considered as an issue facing EFL students in academic writing and the department and teachers could overcome this issue by giving students more spelling, dictation and vocabulary practices.

Table 6.35: Factor 5, English writing proficiency factor**Item 10. I have good knowledge about different essay writing styles and structures.**

			disagree	neutral	agree	total
Academic years	year2	Count	51	46	29	126
		% within Academic years	40.5%	36.5%	23.0%	100.0%
	year3	Count	28	34	24	86
		% within Academic years	32.6%	39.5%	27.9%	100.0%
	year4	Count	56	59	39	154
		% within Academic years	36.4%	38.3%	25.3%	100.0%
Total	Count		135	139	92	366
	% within Academic years		36.9%	38.0%	25.1%	100.0%

Across the three years there is a fairly consistent picture emerging from the data and that is that only about a quarter of the students in the sample agreed with this item. Three quarters of the sample was either neutral or disagreed on this issue. This would seem to suggest that EFL language proficiency is considered as an issue facing EFL students in academic writing and, the department has to give more focus on teaching different essay writing styles and structures. The issue of the knowledge of different writing organising and writing structures should be given more attention and the teachers and the department should be aware of it.

The overall explanations of results of cross tabs for factor 5, English language proficiency factor:

When the four cross tabulations for items 5, 8, 9 and 10 are considered there are some interesting points which begin to emerge from viewing all four analyses as a group. First, there is a degree of consistency between the percentages between year groups. This seems surprising and interesting in that there doesn't appear to be a great deal of change or progression between the year groups. The same issues seem to affect students whether they are reporting from year 2 or year 4. Normally, the expectation would be that there should be progress or at least change between year groups.

Secondly, the one clear instance where there is a difference between year groups came with responses to item 8 where second year students' disagreement about being able to write an organised composition and essay was 29.4% and increased in year three, to 33.7%, and increased even further in year four to 37.0%. These percentages should be the other way around i.e. that with greater familiarity with the subject, the ability of

students to write an organised composition and essay should increase. These results are somewhat unexpected and will be commented on further in the final recommendations of the thesis. Finally, language proficiency may link up with the English writing textbooks factor and the teaching practices factor.

6.4.2 One way ANOVA Statistical Test

A one way ANOVA statistical test was used to ascertain if there was a significant difference between the three academic year groups of the influence of the five factors on students' academic writing. The table below shows a complete descriptive comparison between the three academic year groups (year 2, year 3 and year 4) identifying whether these factors impact significantly on one academic year more than the other academic years (in year 2 or year 3 or year 4) or impact in all academic year groups.

Table 6. 35: Multiple Comparisons one way ANOVA test

Multiple Comparisons							
Tukey HSD							
Dependent Variable	(I) Academic years	(J) Academic years	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound Upper Bound	
Textbooks	year2	year3	-.07981	.10153	.712	-.3187	.1591
		year4	.11348	.08720	.395	-.0917	.3187
	year3	year2	.07981	.10153	.712	-.1591	.3187
		year4	.19330	.09771	.119	-.0367	.4233
	year4	year2	-.11348	.08720	.395	-.3187	.0917
		year3	-.19330	.09771	.119	-.4233	.0367
anxiety	year2	year3	-.12495	.13609	.629	-.4452	.1953
		year4	-.02453	.11688	.976	-.2996	.2505
	year3	year2	.12495	.13609	.629	-.1953	.4452
		year4	.10042	.13098	.724	-.2078	.4087
	year4	year2	.02453	.11688	.976	-.2505	.2996
		year3	-.10042	.13098	.724	-.4087	.2078
methods	year2	year3	-.21536	.09198	.052	-.4318	.0011
		year4	-.16679	.07899	.089	-.3527	.0191
	year3	year2	.21536	.09198	.052	-.0011	.4318
		year4	.04858	.08852	.847	-.1597	.2569
	year4	year2	.16679	.07899	.089	-.0191	.3527
		year3	-.04858	.08852	.847	-.2569	.1597
class_size	year2	year3	-.04757	.11186	.905	-.3108	.2157
		year4	-.02994	.09607	.948	-.2560	.1961
	year3	year2	.04757	.11186	.905	-.2157	.3108

		year4		.01763	.10766	.985	-.2357	.2710
	year4		year2	.02994	.09607	.948	-.1961	.2560
			year3	-.01763	.10766	.985	-.2710	.2357
proficiency	year2		year3	.02856	.09810	.954	-.2023	.2594
			year4	.04419	.08425	.859	-.1541	.2425
	year3		year2	-.02856	.09810	.954	-.2594	.2023
			year4	.01563	.09442	.985	-.2066	.2378
	year4		year2	-.04419	.08425	.859	-.2425	.1541
			year3	-.01563	.09442	.985	-.2378	.2066

According to the above one-way ANOVA test analysis table, the five factors affected all the three academic year groups and no significant differences were found between them. Finally, both cross- tabulation statistical descriptive analysis tests and one-way ANOVA tests were conducted including all items of the five factors in order to find out if there was a difference in the influences of certain items among the three academic year groups, by making a comparison of the responses of each academic year group. Both Cross- tabulations and a one way ANOVA test revealed that the five factors consistently affected all the three academic year groups. This indicated that there is little or no change or progression occurring in the responses between all the three academic year groups. This is an important finding which is rather counter intuitive and therefore of considerable concern to educators.

6.5 Summary

In this chapter, the analysis of the quantitative research data and findings were presented. The quantitative research data analysis and findings which were reported included factor analyses and the results which were presented in detail including tables for each factor showing the loading and the total reliability. Five factors were extracted from the data. The first and most important factor was ‘the English writing textbooks’ which explained 18.012% of the variance from the factor analysis. Then the second most important factor was ‘writing anxiety’ which explained 11.345 % of the variance from the factor analysis. Following this was ‘teaching practices’ which explained 8.120 % of the variance from the factor analysis. Then, came ‘class size’, which explained 6.686 % of the variance from the factor analysis, followed by ‘English writing proficiency’ which explained 5.389 % of the variance from the factor analysis. The most important issues in English writing facing EFL students as revealed by factor analysis are that the English writing textbooks used at the department are difficult for students, with a gap perceived between the English writing textbook used in the

foundation year and those studied in the foreign languages department. Finally cross-tabulations and one way ANOVA tests were used for statistical descriptive analysis in order to be able to make a comparison between the three academic year groups to identify whether or not there were significant differences between academic year groups. The results show that the five factors are perceived to affect all the three academic year groups consistently. This would appear to suggest that student responses indicate that little progression is being made between year groups and that in terms of teaching practices, similar percentages are suggestive that these are not modified as the students' progress. The next chapter will provide a discussion of the findings.

7 CHAPTER SEVEN: Discussion of the Integrated Findings

7.1 Introduction

The aim of the previous two chapters (chapters five and six) was to analyse the results of the data arising from both the qualitative and quantitative research phases undertaken. Each phase of this sequential exploratory mixed method of data collection and analysis provided some interesting insights regarding the issues faced by Saudi EFL students when undertaking academic writing. The results of the initial qualitative interviews were used to develop a new instrument to be used in a quantitative survey. This new survey was designed to examine and explore the issues with a larger sample of EFL students (n= 366), and its aim was to generalise and contextualise the results of the study, and compare them with the results of phase one (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

This chapter moves on to investigate and discuss the findings of both the quantitative and qualitative research and to highlight those factors which Saudi EFL students undertaking English academic writing at Taif University report as important. The findings of this research suggested that there are five factors, and consequently this chapter will be divided into five sections, with each section exploring a factor with its relevant issues, ultimately answering the main research question which is:

- What are the issues facing Saudi EFL students in academic writing at Taif University?

Therefore, this chapter will develop these ideas, and will draw from both literature and empirical data in order to reach the conclusions of the study.

7.2 The Main Factors of the Current Study:

My research explored the issues facing Saudi EFL undergraduate students in academic writing. Furthermore, it considered the questions of whether there were any hidden or embedded issues encountered by Saudi EFL students which may be of detriment to their progress, but had not previously been mentioned in the literature on the subject.

Factor analysis was used in order to identify the main factors of the research survey questionnaire, and cross- tabulation analysis and a one-way ANOVA were used to examine and highlight differences, if any, between three academic year groups' views

of the more influential factors. The results of the factor analysis indicated that five factors emerged in the responses of Saudi students about academic writing. A survey instrument was developed based on the themes which emerged from phase one, and was used to examine and explore the topic using a sample of 366 EFL students. The results of the one-way ANOVA analysis showed that there were no significant differences between the three academic year groups. On the other hand, the findings of the quantitative study resulted in five main factors being identified as influencing Saudi students' academic writing. These factors were:

- English writing textbooks factor;
- Writing anxiety factor;
- Teaching practices factor;
- Class size factor;
- English writing proficiency factor.

The factors of this study are presented sequentially according to the percentages of the variance explained by each factor, considering the most influential factors identified from the survey by EFL Saudi students in academic writing at Taif University. Therefore, it is important to look at these factors individually before offering a conclusion.

7.2.1 The English writing textbooks factor

Textbook factor

The first main factor explored is the issue of the English writing textbooks available to students in the foundation year, and the English writing textbooks in the foreign languages department. The findings from the qualitative phase highlighted that according to the perceptions of interviewees the textbooks available in both the foundation year and the foreign languages departments were not appropriate. Regarding the textbooks available in the foundation year, the interviewees suggested that the main cause of their weaknesses in written English could be identified as arising from inappropriate textbooks available to them. They suggested that these textbooks were designed for beginners, and offered only basic information about writing in English, and therefore the textbook was not an adequate preparation for university studies. On the other hand, according to the perceptions of interviewees the textbooks available in the foreign languages department were also unsuitable because they were too advanced and above the students' learning level.

In a similar way, the findings of the quantitative survey highlighted that the first main factor influencing Saudi EFL students in academic writing was the inappropriate English writing textbooks in both the foundation year and the English language department with seven items as well as a very high Cronbach Alpha (.817) which accounted for 18.012% of the variance (see chapter 6). Thus, according to the findings of this study, almost 69% of students (see table 6.12 above for Item 45) **thought** that there was a significant gap between the information provided in the English textbooks at the foundation year stage, and the information provided in the textbooks in the foreign languages department. This gives a strong indication that the information regarding English writing taught in the foundation year is not adequate and did not prepare the students well for their further academic studies specially students who want to enrol in the English language department. On the other hand, according to the findings of this study almost 70% of the students in the department believed that English writing courses did not develop the skills requirements of the English language students. Additionally, English writing textbooks did not start gradually from beginners' level, moving to advanced levels. They were initially too difficult being above their English writing abilities, too advanced and too complicated for them.

The issue of the English language textbooks and its degree of appropriateness as a factor influencing academic writing ability is crucial. There appears to be a lack of a comprehensive study such as the current research conducted either in the Taif university context or in any other similar context exploring issues facing undergraduate students in academic writing which revealed important findings regarding inappropriate academic writing textbooks in both the foundation year and English language studies department. For example, Huwari & Al-Khasawneh (2013) conducted a small study in Saudi Arabia which explored the reasons behind the weakness of writing among preparatory year students at Taibah University. Their study sampled only 10 preparatory year students and the findings concluded that students had grammatical mistakes and problems, weak knowledge and understanding of English writing, less practice and less educational background. Huwari & Al-Khasawneh's research suggested that the students did not know how to write a main topic; they did not understand the process of writing and there was not enough practice in writing English. However, the sample used in the study was small and the findings cannot be generalised or utilised. They utilised qualitative semi-structured interviews which only highlighted the issue that the students had little knowledge of the type and level of academic writing required for further academic

studies and examined pre-determined themes to confirm this. However, no mention was made as to whether the available textbooks were helping students in the academic writing skills students need in university and prepare them for future academic studies. Importantly, my research examined a larger sample of students (n=366). The students sampled had finished the foundation year and were currently undergraduate English major students. These students were in a position to evaluate academic writing issues, together with the question of textbooks in both the foundation year and in the department. Moreover, the results may be generalised because of the sample size. The qualitative unstructured interviews of the current study were designed not lead student interviewees towards any specific conclusions because the approach adopted was unstructured. The quantitative survey was part of a sequential exploratory mixed methodology design, combining rich data with statistical rigour, designed to identify important factors, such as the alleged inappropriateness of the textbooks in the curriculum.

Another study conducted about English courses in general and not specifically about writing in the preparatory years at Tabuk University (Saudi Arabia) by Younes & Arabia, (2016) revealed that the English language courses focused on teaching general English, improving communication skills only and not preparing students for academic studies. This was replaced by ESP (English for specific purposes) courses for the preparatory year (foundation year) and the study strongly recommended that the courses and syllabus in the PYP (pre- year preparatory) (foundation year) should focus on teaching ESP to the students at Tabuk University. Nevertheless, the purpose of Younes's and Arabia's study was investigating the effectiveness of using an ESP course for PYP students at Tabuk University from a teaching perspective. The study was all about general English language skills not specifically about writing. Younes's and Arabia's study focused on teachers' perspectives and excluded students' perspectives that were more important because they were more involved in the educational process, and could better describe their experiences regarding what they were exposed to and experienced about the English course. This factor was not emphasised to any significant extent. Consequently, Younes's and Arabia's study gave no indication of the difficulties facing students and no student perspectives of the realities of actual academic studies after finishing the foundation year. However, the current study is specifically about factors facing undergraduate students in English academic writing from the students' perceptions regarding the textbooks for academic writing in both the

foundation year and their further academic studies. They were asked whether the textbook in the foundation year prepared students for academic studies or not. My study also revealed that there is a gap between the content of the English writing textbook in the foundation year which is too simple and easy and did not prepare students for future academic writing in academic studies in different disciplines. At the same time, the academic writing textbooks used in the English department are difficult and more advanced than the students' level of English writing ability. McMullen, (2009), who produced a study on the value and attributes of an effective preparatory English program from the perspective of Saudi University students, did not concentrate on English academic writing, but suggested that after graduation from high school, students realised that their English proficiency was not adequate for academia. However, the current study has been conducted involving students' perceptions of English writing textbooks from the English department alongside the English writing textbooks used in the preparatory year.

On the other hand, regarding the English writing textbooks in the English department just a few papers (e.g. Al-Refa'ai, 2001; Al-Buainain, 2011) had reported difficulties facing students in academic writing in the English language department in different contexts but not in Saudi the context. For example, Al-Buainain, (2011) conducted a study about writing as part of Qatar University's review of university courses, aiming to identify the problems and key issues behind EFL writing. The study examined the scripts of 40 female students who were majoring in English language studies at Qatar University, and who were undertaking their first writing course. Al-Buainain suggested that different materials from different sources were needed when teaching writing skills, rather than a dependency on the official textbook alone. Therefore, the proper way to learn how to write is by practising writing. Al-Buainain also recommended revision of writing courses and teaching materials.

Al-Refa'ai (2001) conducted a study in the Yemeni context about reasons for the low academic achievement in English language at Aden University. He found that teaching methods, the courses used, teaching materials, and the methods of assessment utilized by instructors were major factors affecting students' accomplishment of the English language. However, Al-Refa'ai's study was conducted in the Yemeni context which is different from the Saudi context. In both, studies are in different contexts and they did not involve the textbooks of the foundation which is the pathway for students in

preparing them for academic studies whether in the English discipline or any other disciplines as the current study did.

Therefore, according to the findings of the current study there is an important issue related to the textbooks and the courses used in English writing in the foundation year and in the English language department at Taif University. Thus, I believe that the English language programme in the preparatory year (foundation year) should be more intensive and the English writing syllabus should be designed to prepare students for academic studies, to write assignments and answer any written exams properly, conveying the exact meaning they intend to the teachers and the readers. The textbooks for English academic writing in the foundation year need to be tailored to students' academic needs to benefit them in general and in their further academic studies in different majors and, in particular, for the students who intend to specialise in English language studies. The findings of the current study suggested that while there is a gap between the writing textbook in the preparatory year and the writing textbooks in the department, the English writing courses and textbooks in the department should be designed based on the students' academic level of English starting from the intermediate level of English writing. Thereafter, the textbooks should gradually develop to more advanced levels reaching a satisfactory level of English writing required by students who graduate from the English language department. Thus, writing textbooks should satisfy the students' needs and start gradually from relative beginning level to the intermediate level and then on to the advanced levels in the department. Additionally, the number of the academic writing courses and the textbooks of English academic writing in those courses should be reviewed and changed accordingly to satisfy the students in order to develop and improve their skills while they are studying in the department. Hopefully, stakeholders at Taif University who are in charge and responsible for academic writing textbooks need to take into consideration what kinds of academic writing students need for their academic studies. This moves the discussion on to the issue of writing anxiety experienced by students as the second factor.

7.2.2 Writing anxiety factor

The second main factor facing Saudi EFL students is the learner's psychological skills. This factor includes writing anxiety. The findings of this study showed that anxiety was an issue reported by Saudi EFL students in academic writing.

The findings in the qualitative research suggested that students were afraid to speak and write in English because they could make mistakes, and were anxious about the reaction of their teachers and classmates. The findings of the quantitative study reported that 40% of the students experienced writing anxiety, which constituted a significant proportion of the sample of 366 students.

Several studies conducted in international contexts relate to the issues of writing anxiety and are in line with the findings of this research. For example, the current study is consistent with several studies in different contexts (e.g. Hassan, 2001; Salebi, 2004; Al-Ahmad, 2003; Asadifard and Koosha, 2013) that writing anxiety is one of the main factors encountered by EFL students in academic writing. Hassan, (2001) conducted a study investigating the relationship between writing apprehension and self-esteem with the writing quality of Egyptian EFL university students. In Hassan's study 132 participants from third-year students were studying in the English Department College of Education, Mansoura University (Egypt). New instruments were developed involving three tools: A Writing Apprehension Questionnaire; a Foreign Language Self-Esteem Scale; and written exam tasks for 40 minutes. It was found that writing apprehension had a significant influence on the writing skills of students. Less nervous students wrote better pieces compared with students with a higher level of apprehension. In addition, students with low levels of apprehension possessed higher self-confidence (Hassan, 2001). However, the context of the current study was different and was comprehensive in exploring issues facing EFL students in academic writing and not confined to just one issue like writing anxiety.

Moreover, a study conducted by Al-Ahmad (2003) to analyse and attempt to solve the problem of writing anxiety that increased among both native and non-native learners of the English language examined 349 native speakers studying with 12 L1 writing teachers, as well as 77 ESL participants studying with three L2 writing teachers. Both groups were asked to complete the Daly and Miller Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) twice: once as a pre-test and once as a post-test. The findings of the study showed that the ESL/EFL learners faced more challenges in English writing that negatively affected

their performance in the learning process compared with their native-English-speaking counterparts. He recommended that writing anxiety among EFL/ESL students should be taken into consideration in order to reduce apprehension.

In the same regard, a further piece of research conducted in an Iranian context at the Islamic Azad University, Iran by Asadifard and Koosha, (2013) looked at the perceptions of EFL teachers and students on the subject of academic writing reluctance. Asadifard, and Koosha's research used a quantitative study questionnaire distributed to 12 EFL teachers and 37 EFL students. The data revealed a high degree of writing anxiety among EFL students. It seems that writing activities are the last choice of EFL students if the options available to them are from the main language skills. Furthermore, it appears that EFL students avoid engaging in writing activities unless they have to, and there is a strong indication of writing anxiety. The reason for this anxiety from the teachers' point of view was identified as task difficulty, whilst the students believed that their anxiety stemmed from lack of reading. However, the sample of the study was small and the findings could not be generalised. This is unlike the present research study where one method was used to explore data and a second method was used to gain more data that in order to confirm issues from the first phase of the study.

In regard to the Saudi context most of the studies conducted were related to anxiety in general focusing more on speaking anxiety not writing anxiety adopting and using Horwitz's Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) which measures the English language communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety factors. The emphasis on speaking anxiety in the Saudi context could be because the English language is not commonly used in Saudi Arabia as an everyday language or an official language beside the Arabic language. There are not many foreigners who speak English in Saudi Arabia so local people would have difficulty in communicating with them in the English language. However there have been a few studies conducted related to writing anxiety. The researcher came across only one study specifically related to writing, including writing anxiety which was entitled 'Saudi college students' perception of their errors in written English' by Salebi (2004). Salebi's study used the midterm test analysis method. The researcher analysed the comments on errors in the written English midterm tests of 32 Saudi female college students. The study revealed that almost all thirty-two students claimed anxiety as the main reason for basic errors in writing. Most of the studies on the anxiety issue were about language anxiety or speaking anxiety, but not specifically about writing. For example, Balla,

(2017) investigated the level of foreign language anxiety in Saudi Classrooms experienced by female students in Prince Sattam University. The study was specifically about language anxiety and not about writing. A Case Study was compiled, again using Horwitz's Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) which measured English language communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. The study revealed a high level of anxiety in language communication followed by test anxiety followed by students' awareness and fear of negative evaluation. Accordingly, Rafada and Madini, (2017) explored the main causes of English language speaking anxiety experienced by Saudi students. Their research sampled 126 Saudi students studying general English language courses in the foundation year. A mixed method was used to collect the data. The study revealed that there were several causes of speaking anxiety, and they were said to be (a) a weak educational system at schools (b) test anxiety (c) lack of vocabulary (d) classroom atmosphere (e) peer anxiety and (f) EFL teachers. Javid, (2014) also looked at the causes of learning anxiety using Horwitz's Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). His sample consisted of 216 first year students in the preparatory year at Taif University, selected randomly. The findings of his study showed that students' level of language learning anxiety to be in line with my research, with 40% out of a sample of 366 EFL students experiencing writing anxiety. Both studies suggest that anxiety is an important aspect of language learning, the earlier studies were about speaking anxiety and a similar degree of anxiety has been found in this study relating to writing.

It is fair to conclude that anxiety has a strong influence on EFL students' writing ability. This issue should be dealt with by motivating students to write more even if they make mistakes and expose them to more writing exercises and more practice. Students need to be able to realise that there is no harm in making mistakes as they can learn from their mistakes. It is important, in this instance, for the academic and administrative hierarchy of Taif University to be aware of the issues of anxiety as it applies to writing in English, and to compile a strategy for alleviating the problem.

7.2.3 Teaching Practices Factor

The third factor facing Saudi EFL students in academic writing is teaching practices factor and this has been divided into three issues:

- (1) Inappropriate teaching methods.
- (2) Insufficient writing practice.
- (3) Teacher feedback and peer feedback.

7.1.1.1. Inappropriate teaching writing methods.

According to this research, there is an issue of inappropriate teaching methods. The findings in the qualitative analysis demonstrated that the teachers followed traditional teaching methods when teaching writing. English writing teachers were simply teaching students how to write in English, and students were further advised to copy and imitate their teachers' methods of writing in English. The findings of the quantitative research showed that teachers did not use up-to-date teaching methods when instructing students on how to write in English. The use of up-to-date teaching methods and new strategies may have more advantages for the students, and may suit students more than the traditional methods.

The findings of my research concur with a several previous pieces of research regarding the importance of this issue. For example, Al-Khasawneh, (2010) investigated the academic writing problems of Arab postgraduate students at the College of Business in Malaysia. He used qualitative face to face interviews involving 10 Arab postgraduate students as his sample. The participants were 5 Jordanians, 2 Iraqis, 2 Libyans, and 1 Yemeni. His findings revealed inappropriate teaching methods and a poor teaching environment as the main causes of writing weaknesses. The results of my research were in line with findings of Al-Khasawneh, (2010), which confirmed that inappropriate teaching methods and the teaching environment are one of the main issues behind students' weaknesses in writing. However, my study conducted on undergraduate EFL students specialising in English, used mixed methods with 366 participants which is different from Al-Khasawneh's study which was about postgraduate students with a small sample, thus his results cannot be generalised on all Arab students and the context is different from the Saudi context.

Some further research conducted by So, & Lee, (2013) involved a case study of Korean ESL students' perceptions and explored the effects of an L2 writing instructional model

for blended learning in higher education. The research used a prototype of an instructional model for second language writing and sought to explore its effect as a blended learning model in higher education. The researchers used 51 Korean participants in two universities, and utilised an experimental course consisting of a pre-test then a post-test called “Logical Thinking and Writing in English”. The participants included both undergraduate and graduate male and female students. The study revealed that this instructional model for second language writing was more effective than the traditional method of teaching academic writing. Also, the use of this as the prototype model for L2 writing has many advantages such as decreasing the students’ overloaded study, adding more attractive learning tools which reinforced the interaction between the students and the teacher, and led to more communication between them. The research itself mentioned that it was conducted as a case study and the sample of the study was small. Furthermore, Giridharan, (2011) writes about identifying gaps in the academic writing ability of ESL students in order to know the effects of the overall academic performance of the students in a Malaysian context. His research utilised a qualitative pragmatic case study approach and explored academic writing challenges faced by students. More specifically, he focused on evaluating academic essay drafts of EFL students and giving feedback forms to the students. These feedback forms were intended to collect information regarding the challenges faced in academic writing tasks, and to identify common grammatical, structural and syntactical errors made by students in their writing tasks. His recommendation was that several methods of teaching academic writing needed to be used to develop academic writing for ESL students such as new strategies that teach students how to plan, organise, draft and edit their work. However, it is still the case that in Saudi Arabia, the most favoured and commonly used methods by English instructors in teaching English writing are the Audio Lingual Method, followed by the Grammar Translation Method. This is where instructors talk through most of the lesson explaining what the lesson is about and how to address it, and students rarely speak or ask questions even if they do not understand. Classes are normally quiet since the students take a passive role in the learning process, thus the teaching methodology used by Saudi Arabian English teachers is not appropriate for learning English as a foreign language (Zafer, 2002; Fareh, 2010; Alhaisoni, 2012; Alkubaidi, 2014).

It appears, then, that using inappropriate approaches and strategies, is a potential cause of many difficulties for students. Therefore, it is difficult not to conclude that the

foreign language department at Taif University, and the English writing teachers, need to consider new methods of teaching English writing and benefit from the findings of this research. It is clear that there is a need for using up to date approaches to teaching writing and revising the English writing textbooks, involving the teachers in choosing textbooks more suitable for students that may bring many benefits and satisfy students' needs in wishing to improve their writing skills.

7.2.3.1 Insufficient writing practice

A further issue in this wider context is the question of insufficient writing practice. Participants in the qualitative study mentioned that there was a lack of writing practice and students needed more practical experience to improve this important skill. In this connection, the findings of the quantitative part of the research showed that students did not practice writing enough at university and also did not practice writing at home.

The findings of this research are consistent with previous studies as the lack of writing practice is one of the issues which influenced EFL students. For example, Chokwe (2011) conducted research exploring perceptions and experiences of first year university students and teachers of academic writing in South Africa. Chokwe used a qualitative research methodology conducting focus group interviews and questionnaires to 48 students from different faculties and eight English teachers participated. The study revealed that ESL student faced many problems in academic writing. They were unprepared for writing academically and needed to be exposed to intensive writing activities. The results of Chokwe's work are consistent with this research despite the fact that they were undertaken in different countries, and drew on different sample sizes. Interestingly Al-Badwawi, (2011) conducted a study about the perceptions and practices of first year students' academic writing at the Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman. His work found that insufficient writing practice was one of the main reasons for the students' weaknesses. Most of the students mentioned that they did not practice writing outside the classroom and did not read any English, not even books related to their specialisations. Moreover, they did not use English in their everyday life which is consistent with the findings of this research. However, Al-Badwawi, adopted a qualitative research design using seven focus group interviews which were conducted with students. Fifteen interviews were conducted with teachers in the English Language Department, and he utilised some document analysis.

It can be suggested that considerable practice is needed for developing writing skills in order to overcome the effects of lack of practice. Teachers need to motivate students to practice writing at home by giving English homework, and students need to be more committed to improving their academic writing by practicing writing independently of teacher involvement in order to improve their academic writing because they are required to do more writing in their exams in order to graduate.

7.2.3.2 Lack of teacher feedback and peer feedback

The third issue of this factor according to the findings is teacher feedback and peer feedback. Those interviewed in the qualitative study mentioned that their teachers did not give feedback, and there was a claim that teachers did not have enough time to review what students wrote. At the same time the findings of the quantitative research suggested that most of the students believed that that teachers gave little or no feedback on their writing, consequently students did not know whether what they had written was correct or not.

This finding agreed with some previous studies that recognised the great importance of teacher feedback and peer feedback in improving the students' academic writing such as Hyland & Hyland, (2006); Jones, (2007); Ferris & Hedgcock, (2005); Lundstrom & Baker, (2009) who found that teacher and peer feedback helped improve EFL students' writing by illustrating their mistakes and demonstrating what they should avoid in the future. This process also encouraged learners through positive feedback. Hyland & Hyland, (2006) mentioned that teachers' feedback was considered an important method in improving students writing which encouraged students to revise their work. In the same line, Razali, (2014) conducted a mixed method study exploring the impact of teacher written feedback on undergraduate student revisions on ESL students' writing at Universiti Malaysia Perlis. The study revealed that the written feedback of the teachers enhanced students' revisions who accepted the teachers' feedback positively. Moreover, Silver and Lee, (2007) stated that teachers' feedback has a crucial role in writing skills which familiarised students with their points of strength and weakness, and as a result of the teachers' feedback, they were enabled to overcome their weaknesses and benefit from their strengths in their writing. However, Asiri (1997) discovered that teachers' written feedback on English writing of Saudi EFL students mainly focused on superficial problems such as grammar and vocabulary, paying little or no attention to other important features such as content and organisation. Similarly, Abbuhl (2005)

compared two groups of students, one receiving semester-long instruction while the other received only one set of written comments. The findings showed that extra feedback and instruction resulted in greater improvements in organisation, argumentation, and language accuracy.

There may be many reasons why teachers do not give feedback to students on their writing. It could be the problem of class size, or that teachers are not committed enough, or indeed, that students did not ask for feedback. However, I believe that teachers need to take into consideration peer feedback as one of the options, as one of the different up-to-date teaching approaches that might work with the students and improve their writing skills. Teachers should explain their comments and the corrections of the students' writing to enable the students know their mistakes and how to avoid them in future writing. Thus, students tend to work more carefully and with more interest when they know that their work will be checked by teachers. Students usually have less interest when they know that teachers are not greatly concerned with checking their work and providing them with feedback.

7.2.4 Class size factor

The issue of class size facing Saudi EFL students is critical, and the findings of my research showed that class size was an important aspect of the contextual factor. The qualitative findings of this research indicated that Saudi EFL students faced the problem of large class sizes. This negatively impacted on their performance in their academic writing because there was limited opportunity to practice writing, and teachers were not able to give students equal attention, or feedback because of the size of the class. The quantitative findings showed that more than 70% of the students mentioned the class size as a big issue that they had to face. According to the findings of this study large classes really restrict the quality of teacher feedback.

The findings of this research are consistent with other previous studies on the influences of the class size on the learning process in general and academic writing in particular. Various studies have been conducted in different countries, and there seems to be consensus that class size is a serious issue affecting the learning process. For example, a study was conducted in the UK by Blatchford, Bassett, & Brown, (2011) to examine the effects of class size on classroom engagement and teacher-pupil interaction. The study compared the effect of class size on the achievement levels of primary school students and secondary school students. Systematic observations were used on 686 students in 49

schools. The study revealed that small class sizes allowed students to have more attention from the teacher and created more interaction between them. This in turn increased the students' achievement while large classes decreased the classroom engagement as well as the students' achievement. Although Blatchford, Bassett, & Brown's (2011) research was conducted on public secondary schools about the impact of class size on teaching and learning in general while the current study was conducted with undergraduate students about academic writing issues facing students. Nevertheless, there is some interesting correlation between the two studies.

Bahanshal, (2013) conducted a study in Saudi Arabia investigating the effect of class size on teaching and learning English as a foreign language. A Qualitative study carried out in two public secondary schools interviewed six Saudi English teachers about their perceptions of large classes. The result of the study showed that large classes impact on students' outcomes, and that there are difficulties in teaching large numbers of students in one class. Another study conducted by Almulla, (2015) looked at the effects of class size on teaching in a primary school in Saudi Arabia. The study investigated teachers' perceptions of teaching in Years 4, 5 and 6 regarding class size. The study used 30 teachers as a sample. A quantitative survey was distributed asking the teachers whether class size can impact on teachers' beliefs, attitudes and teaching methods. The results revealed that large classes influenced their teaching and limited the use of a variety of teaching methods. It also favoured the use of teacher-centred teaching methods. The majority of the teachers said that they prefer to teach in small classes containing 15 to 20 students.

However, based on the findings of this research, it can be suggested that the foreign languages department should take into consideration large class sizes as an obstacle to the student learning process. Smaller class sizes give the teachers the opportunity to revise and explain the comments and feedback on the students writing accurately. A large class limits the teachers' opportunities to providing writing activities needed for the students and prevents the teachers giving equal attention to students to practice or to revise with the teachers. Furthermore, it tends to prevent students asking about whatever they do not understand and for which they need more explanation. In these ways, large classes restrict the quality of teaching. Thus, I believe that one of the difficulties of academic writing facing EFL students truly comes from the large number of students in the class. Thus, the English language department should limit the number

of students in each class to enable the teachers to provide activities needed for students and also to give students enough time to practise writing. Therefore, the department should be aware of the class size issue which will be recommended in this study.

7.2.5 English writing proficiency factor

The fifth main factor facing EFL students is the English writing proficiency factor which involves two main issues:

- (1) English writing proficiency
- (2) Poor knowledge of English writing styles and organisational structure

7.2.5.1 Poor EFL Proficiency

In the matter of English writing proficiency, the findings of the research showed that students believe that they do make grammatical mistakes while they write in English and do not quite have a good level of English language proficiency. 62.8% of students in the third year believed that they could write accurately, but also with grammatical mistakes which was the highest percentage between the three academic years. This was followed by students in the second year with 57.9%. Finally, 55.8% of students in the fourth year agreed with the statement which said that most of the students in the three academic years (more than 50%) agreed that they have grammatical issues in writing compositions or essays in English.

The results of the research indicated that the English language proficiency issue is affecting English writing ability. This finding of the current research agreed with a number of studies related to academic writing. However, these studies were not as comprehensive as my research. For example, Al-Sawalha & Chow, (2012) looked at the effects of proficiency on the writing processes of Jordanian EFL university students. The sample of the study was 60 students studying English and literature at Yarmouk University in Jordan. The methodology used in the study was quantitative and the collection of data was undertaken through a questionnaire relating to writing strategies. The findings of their study showed that students had a low English writing proficiency, grammatical deficiencies, lack of general and technical vocabulary and logical sentences. A study conducted by Giridharan, (2011) looked at identifying gaps in the academic writing of ESL students. His purpose was to understand what effects these gaps had on the overall academic performance of the students. Giridharan used a qualitative pragmatic case study approach, which explored academic writing challenges

faced by students and identified common grammatical, structural and syntactical errors students made in their writing tasks. The results revealed that students needed more targeted activities to improve linguistic language proficiency such as grammar, sentence and paragraph structures. Similarly, Martirosyan, Hwang, & Wanjohi, (2015) looked specifically at the impact of the English proficiency on academic performance of international students in the USA. The methodology used was an ex-post facto, non-experimental approach. They examined the impact of language proficiency of the four main skills of the academic performance of the students. The method used to collect the data was a self-report questionnaire aimed at 59 students studying in north central Louisiana in the United States. Students were asked to evaluate their English language proficiency; they were also asked whether they had difficulties in understanding the main four skills of the reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and whether their language proficiency affected their academic achievement. The results showed that less than half of the participants had difficulties in the main four skills.

It can be assumed that without a certain level of English language proficiency, EFL students will not be able to use any of the main (writing, reading, listening, and speaking) English skills required in the English language. Therefore, university students should have at least the minimum requirements of English proficiency and be able to use the four main skills of speaking, reading, listening and writing at an acceptable level. Therefore, English proficiency is crucial for EFL students and without an adequate level of English language proficiency, students cannot communicate or succeed in using any form of writing, whether to answer examination questions or to generate and express thoughts and ideas in an appropriate written form. Without a strong background in the basic grammar of the English language, a certain amount of English vocabulary, and knowledge of the proper structure of different forms of writing, students will not be able to produce a piece of writing of even adequate quality.

7.2.5.2 Poor knowledge of writing styles and organizational structures

Poor prior knowledge of English writing and writing organisational structure is a significant part of the overall issue. The findings of the qualitative study highlighted that students perceived their knowledge of English writing as weak and felt a need to follow the structures and organisations of different writing styles. EFL students entered the department having no ideas about different types of essay writing and the organisational structure of writing. Because of this, many students struggled with

writing English and had to learn a considerable amount of information regarding different types of essay writing and the necessary organisational structuring.

The findings of the quantitative study reported that almost 37% felt they lacked good knowledge about different essay writing styles and structures. It is interesting that the findings of my research are consistent with Alfaki, (2015) who sought to identify writing problems among university students in writing English. A quantitative descriptive content analysis research method was used on 20 university students studying English at the Nile Valley University, North Sudan in 2014. The results of the study revealed that university students had several writing problems and a lack of knowledge of different academic writing styles, and the lack of knowledge of organizational structure was among them. Another study by Huwari, & Al-Khasawneh, (2013) set out to identify the reasons behind the weaknesses of writing in English among preparatory year students' at Taibah University. A qualitative semi-structured interview was used on 10 male preparatory year students. The findings revealed grammatical weakness, and related weaknesses of knowledge and understanding. Students had no knowledge about how to write a main topic and they did not know the process of writing. However, the sample of the study was small thus the finding could not be generalised.

It can be said that EFL language proficiency is considered as an issue facing EFL students in academic writing at Taif University, therefore more attention should be given to teaching different essay writing styles and structures in the foundation year. The department has to focus more on teaching different essay writing styles and structures and be aware of this issue.

7.3 Summary

Issues as factors encountered by Saudi EFL students in academic writing have been explored and discussed sequentially which is answering the main research question “what are the issues facing Saudi EFL students in academic writing at Taif University?”. Thus, the findings of the five factors influencing Saudi EFL students in academic writing at Taif University were discussed in detail. The first and most important factor was ‘the English writing textbooks’ which explained 18.012 % of the variance from the factor analysis. Then the second most important factor was ‘writing anxiety’ which explained 11.345 % of the variance from the factor analysis. Following this was ‘teaching practices’ which explained 8.120 % of the variance from the factor analysis. ‘Class size’, explained 6.686 % of the variance from the factor analysis, followed by ‘English writing proficiency’ which explained 5.389 % of the variance from the factor analysis. The most important issues in English writing facing EFL students as revealed by factor analysis are that the English writing textbooks used at the department are difficult for students, with a gap perceived between the English writing textbook used in the foundation year and those studied in the foreign languages department. Finally, cross- tabulations and one way ANOVA tests were used for statistical descriptive analysis to be able to make a comparison between the responses of the three academic year groups in order to identify whether or not there were significant differences between them. The results show that there were no significant differences between the three year groups across the five factors. The conclusions and recommendations arising from my research will be elaborated in detail in the next chapter.

8 CHAPTER EIGHT: Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

This chapter will briefly summarise the conclusions of this research, and will offer some recommendations. The chapter will briefly restate the aims of the research including the main questions of the research, who participated in the process, how I collected the data, and the main findings. The chapter will propose how this research is a contribution towards broadening the knowledge of the subject matter, before offering some suggestions for future research.

8.2 Aims, Participants, Data Collection and the main findings

8.2.1 Aims and questions of the Study

The purpose of this research was to explore the issues and problems faced by Saudi EFL undergraduate students in academic writing, and to ascertain the presence of any hidden or embedded issues likely to be encountered by EFL students in their writing in this particular context. Therefore, the current research offers an insight into issues faced by Saudi EFL students. It was anticipated that if there were some hitherto unmentioned factors, this research could provide an understanding of them, particularly in the Saudi context.

The main question of the study which has been sufficiently answered was:

- a) What are the issues facing Saudi EFL students in academic writing at Taif University?

8.2.2 Participants and Data Collection

The sample used in my research consisted of 366 volunteers from three different academic years studying English majors. They were asked to complete the main data collection instrument (questionnaire survey) which was developed from themes emerging from a qualitative study conducted earlier as the first phase of the research. The methodology employed was an exploratory mixed method design.

8.2.3 The main findings of the current study:

Five main themes and sub-themes emerged from phase I. These five themes were English language proficiency, which included three sub-themes, poor EFL proficiency, lack of vocabulary, prior knowledge of writing styles and organisational structure of English writing. The second theme was the 'psychological learner study skills theme', which also included two sub-themes, students' motivation and writing anxiety. The

third theme was the teaching practices theme, which included three sub-issues, using inadequate teaching methods, lack of practice and teacher and peer feedback. The fourth theme was English writing textbooks which also included inappropriate textbooks and curriculum in the foundation year and an inappropriate English writing curriculum in the language department. Finally, the last theme was the contextual issues which included the number of students (class size), and insufficient time for class sessions. These themes were utilised to develop a new quantitative questionnaire survey instrument which led to phase two as the quantitative study.

In the quantitative Phase II a questionnaire survey was developed and distributed to 366 EFL students in order to examine and explore factors impacting on EFL students in academic writing. Specifically, factor analysis was utilised to be able to identify the underlying factors in the survey instrument. The results of the factor analysis were presented in detail including tables for each factor including the loading and the total reliability. Thus, five factors were extracted from the data, where they together explained around 49% of the total variance in the data. The first and most important factor was 'the English writing textbooks' which explained 18.012 % of the variance from the factor analysis. Then the second most important factor was 'writing anxiety' which explained 11.345 % of the variance from the factor analysis. Following this was 'teaching practices' which explained 8.120 % of the variance from the factor analysis. Then, came 'class size', which explained 6.686 % of the variance from the factor analysis, followed by 'English writing proficiency' which explained 5.389 % of the variance from the factor analysis. The most important issues in English writing facing EFL students as revealed by factor analysis are that the English writing textbooks used at the department are difficult for students, with a gap perceived between the English writing textbook used in the foundation year and those studied in the foreign languages department.

Finally, cross- tabulations and one way ANOVA tests were used for statistical descriptive analysis to be able to make a comparison between the three academic year groups in order to identify whether or not there were significant differences between responses from the three academic years groups. The results show that in all the three academic year groups the five factors are consistently present, and there were no significant differences between the year groups' responses.

To conclude, the aims of the current study have been achieved which were to explore issues facing Saudi EFL students in academic writing. Consequently, the most important issue facing EFL students in academic writing as revealed by the factor analysis is the English writing textbooks used by the department as well as the textbooks used in the foundation year. Textbooks used by the department are difficult for EFL students in all three academic year groups which explains that the English language textbooks in the foundation year did not achieve their purposes which is preparing students for their academic studies, specifically in academic writing. This explains the gap between English writing textbooks in the foundation year and at the foreign languages department. This is the English writing textbooks factor. This is considered a new finding and has not been highlighted in any other research conducted in the Saudi context as either a theme or a factor facing students in academic writing. Consequently, the findings of this research offer some insights and recommendations as to remedies that might help the targeted groups of teachers, students and the institution to overcome writing difficulties and so contribute to the field of EFL/ESL writing education and development. The findings of this research could also be utilised to suggest developing new English writing textbooks and a curriculum that meets the specific needs of the EFL/ESL university students and which might improve English writing teaching methodologies used by English language teachers. Therefore, the results and recommendations of this study should be taken into consideration and hopefully will be of benefit in the field of EFL/ESL writing education development.

8.3 Contributions of the Research

This research makes contributions to several aspects in in the field of EFL/ESL writing education development.

Firstly, there has been no comprehensive research study that has explored the issues facing Saudi EFL undergraduate students in academic writing using a sequential exploratory mixed method design. This identified five fundamental factors facing EFL students in academic writing. Therefore, this current research provides a significant contribution in the field of EFL writing education development in general, as well as in helping develop the academic writing skills of EFL students, in the Saudi Arabian context in particular. Moreover, the outcome of this research will, it is hoped, be beneficial not only to Taif University, but also to Saudi institutions that teach English as a foreign language.

The current research is a positive contribution insofar as it identifies factors that influenced EFL students in academic writing, including the foundation year which is supposed to prepare students for academic studies. Consequently, the findings of this study revealed significant data related to the inappropriateness of English writing textbooks in the foundation year and in the English language department. They are seen as an influential factor by EFL students in academic writing development, and they need to be taken into consideration.

Furthermore, unlike nearly all previous research, this study utilised a sequential exploratory mixed method designed to explore factors as well as to investigate in depth whether or not there might be hidden and embedded new factors in a specific context by using more than one data gathering method. Therefore, qualitative and quantitative tools were used in order to have and explore rich data. This was achieved by the researcher through utilising qualitative interviews in the first phase of the study to obtain a better in-depth understanding, exploring issues facing EFL students in academic writing which might occur only in this specific context. Then, based on the results of the interview themes, a quantitative questionnaire survey was developed in order to examine and obtain wider data from a larger sample of participants in order to be able to confirm and generalise the results of the study. After that the use of factor analysis identified the five factors that influenced students in academic writing.

Additionally, the new instrument designed in this study can be used as a model for future studies in similar contexts. Thus, the sequential exploratory mixed methods approach used in this study appears to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' writing experience clarifying issues and obstacles facing them in academic writing within a particular educational context.

Hence, this research can claim that it has contributed to understanding the field of EFL writing education by highlighting those factors which are believed to face EFL students in academic writing in Taif University in particular and also more widely in Saudi Arabia. Consequently, the findings of this study fill the lacuna in the literature of EFL writing education, and offer some recommendations and remedies as well as suggestions for further research to be conducted in some other specific aspects of academic writing.

8.4 Limitations of this study

This research has limitations which must be taken into consideration. The first limitation was that the researcher could not persuade more volunteer students to participate. It was expected that at least 12 students would be interviewed but, in the event, only six EFL students volunteered, even though the number of volunteers was sufficient for the study.

The second limitation was that this study involved only the male section of Taif University. The researcher is not allowed to conduct the study with females, and is not allowed to interview female students. This can be attributed to cultural and religious segregation policies between males and females in the education system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The third limitation was, that the students who participated in the qualitative interviews were not randomly selected but volunteered to take part in the study. They were a self-selected sample. This may have been due to the hesitation to participate by some students, and the unavailability of others. Thus, this aspect of the findings might not represent all students.

Recommendations for practice and future research

8.5 Recommendations of the study

The following recommendations have been made on the basis of the findings of the study:

- English writing textbooks in the foundation year should be replaced with more suitable English writing textbooks which prepare students for academic studies and satisfy the students' academic needs. It would be more beneficial for students to be introduced to more writing styles and essay writing in the Foundation Year because it may give students information about the kinds of writing to be used in academic studies. Students are not supposed to be perfect in producing all kinds of academic writing from the start, but with gradually challenging tasks, they would be at least more prepared and have ideas for different kinds of academic writing needed to be done in different academic disciplines later in their programmes.

- The foundation year could be replaced with intensive general English language courses in the first year for students who intended to join the foreign languages department specialising in English in order to improve the English language proficiency and skills in general and writing in particular as suggested by one of the interviewees of this study. I believe that replacing the foundation year with intensive general English language courses for one year would be more beneficial for the English language students who went on to specialise in English studies.
- Official textbooks need to be simplified in order to be understood by students who have just completed a foundation year and whose ability in written English is limited or the standard in the foundation year needs to be raised considerably so that students are better prepared when they start studying at the English department as freshmen students.
- English writing textbooks in the foreign languages department should be replaced with more suitable English writing textbooks according to students' level of English to be able to cope gradually with different writing challenging tasks and difficulties.
- It is recommended that challenging academic writing tasks should be spread throughout the entire three academic years to satisfy the students' needs as well as the foreign language department's requirements.
- Teachers are recommended to consider using updated teaching writing methods and strategies. Thus, the application of different writing strategies such as brainstorming, teacher feedback, peer-feedback and group discussion should be used. This could enhance students' ability to write and improve the writing quality of ESL/EFL students in general which would be more beneficial for students. Teachers should place more emphasis on feedback and they should develop comments to help students understand the mistakes they have made in writing and how these can be corrected. Thus, the correction of the students writing enables the students to know their mistakes and how to avoid them in future writing.
- Teachers should apply more writing practice inside the class and motivate and encourage students to write outside the classroom. Considerable practice is recommended for developing writing skills in order to overcome the effects of lack of

practice. Teachers need to motivate students to practise writing at home by asking students to write in English as homework given to them to practise English writing.

- The researcher recommends that class numbers should be reduced giving the teacher the opportunity to revise and explain the comments and feedback to the students.

Based on the above discussion of the findings and limitations of the study, a number of suggestions for further research were identified which will be presented in the next section.

8.6 Implications for Further Studies

This research suggests a number of areas that need to be investigated in further research:

- The current study was conducted in Taif University, and one of the proposals is that perhaps similar studies need to be carried out in different universities and in different cities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which may prove beneficial for a comparative analysis.
- The current study applied to male participants only, a similar study involving women is essential in order that a comparative study can be undertaken.
- This research suggests that new textbooks in the foreign language department should be piloted in order to know whether or not these new textbooks satisfied students' needs and the department's requirements.
- This research suggests that a curriculum evaluation study of textbooks for academic writing of the foundation year should be carried out to obtain comprehensive information whether or not the textbooks prepare students for academic studies.
- The current research focused on the students' perspectives of issues encountered by them in academic writing. A similar study to the current one would be beneficial to investigate issues facing EFL students from the teachers' perspectives.

8.7 Summary of the Thesis

In summary, the current study has explored issues encountered by Saudi EFL students in academic writing at Taif University., Five factors were extracted from the data, where together they explain around 49% of the total variance in the data

It is expected that the findings of this research offered some insights and recommendations as to remedies that might help the targeted groups of teachers, students and the institution to overcome writing difficulties and contribute in the field of EFL/ESL writing education and development. The findings of this research could also be utilised to encourage the development of new English writing textbooks and a curriculum that meets the specific needs of the EFL/ESL university students. The findings could lead to improvements in English writing teaching methodologies used by English language teachers. Therefore, the results and recommendations of this study should be taken into consideration and hopefully will be of benefit in the field of EFL/ESL writing education development.

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Appendix

Appendix A: ethical approval of Hull University for data collection

From: Janet Cuthbertson <J.Cuthbertson@hull.ac.uk>
To: adeeb hakami <adis24h@yahoo.com>
Cc: Nigel G Wright <N.G.Wright@hull.ac.uk>
Subject: ethics

Dear Adeeb

I am able to confirm that the Faculty of Education Research Committee has now approved your application for ethical approval and has given authorisation for you to begin to collect data for the research study (*The issues encountered by Saudi EFL students in academic writing at Taif University*).

Ethics Reference number 201401840

Janet

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Appendix B: ethical approval of Taif University for data collection

Consent Form for Institutions/ Organisations

The FACULTY OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE

CONSENT FORM – For Institutions/Organisations

I, **Head of Foreign languages Department. of .Taif University .**

Hereby give permission for the researcher to conduct his research and collect the data needed for his study during three months period of time from 09/10/2016 to 30/12/2016 , to be involved in a research study being undertaken by: ADEEB HAKAMI and I understand that the purpose of the research is: *to explore and investigate the issues facing Saudi EFL students in academic writing based on their own experiences and voices. The main study question is: What are the issues encountered by Saudi EFL students in academic writing at Taif University?* and that involvement for the institution means the following:-

I understand that

1. The aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible risks/hazards of the research study, have been explained to me.
2. I voluntarily and freely give my consent for the institution/organisation to participate in the above research study.
5. I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained through this institution/organisation will not be used if I so request.
3. I understand that aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals.

I agree that

4. The institution/organisation MAY NOT be named in research publications or other publicity without prior agreement.
5. I DO NOT require an opportunity to check the factual accuracy of the research findings related to the institution/organisation.

Signature: Date: **09/10/2016**

The contact details of the researcher are:

The contact details of the secretary to the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee are **Clare McKinlay**, Research Office, Faculty of Education, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull, HU6 7RX. Email: c.m.mckinlay@hull.ac.uk tel. 01482-465031

In some cases, consent will need to be witnessed e.g. where the subject is blind/intellectually disabled. A witness must be independent of the project and may only sign a certification to the level of his/her involvement. A suggested format for witness certification is included with the sample consent forms. The form should also record the witnesses' signature, printed name and occupation. For particularly sensitive or exceptional research, further information can be obtained from the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee Secretary, e.g. absence of parental consent, use of pseudonyms, etc)



Appendix C: Questionnaire

The issues encountered by Saudi EFL students in academic writing at Taif University

Thank you for taking part in this study. The overall aims of this study are to explore the issues facing Saudi EFL students in academic writing based on their own experiences and voices also to investigate the causes of those issues facing Taif University students in academic writing. Therefore, this research will explore the issues that face Saudi students in academic writing by covering all the educational aspects, as the problems that students face could come from more than one aspect of the educational process. In other words, the issues of the academic writing might come from the curricula, rather than the teaching methods, or might come from both.

The results of the research will, it is hoped, highlight the embedded issues facing the students in academic writing and lead to recommendations of remedies and a consideration of the implications in overcoming the difficulties in teaching and learning academic writing skills, or at least reducing them.

The outcome of this research will, it is hoped, be beneficial not only to Taif University, but also to all English language institutions that teach English as a foreign language in particular and other similar contexts in general.

The data you have provided will be held confidentially. I have considered fully anonymising your data and discarding all information that may identify you. You retain the right to withdraw your data without explanation and retrospectively, by contacting the researcher named below. If you also have any questions about this study or your participation in it, please contact:

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Faculty of education,

Hull University

Consent form
The Issues Encountered by Saudi EFL students In Academic Writing at Taif University

- I understand that my participation in this project will involve completing a questionnaire about issues facing EFL Saudi Students at Taif University, and that it will require approximately 30 minutes of my time.
- I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.
- I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. If for any reason I experience discomfort during participation in this project, I am free to withdraw or discuss my concerns with the researcher.
- I understand that the information provided by me will be used for research purposes only, and will be held totally anonymously, so that it is impossible to trace this information back to me individually. I understand that this information may be retained indefinitely.
- I understand that information provided by me for this study, including my own words, may be used in the research report, but that all such information and/or quotes will be anonymised.
- I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback.

I, consent to participate in the study conducted by *Adeeb Hakami*, faculty of education, TESOL, Hull University under the supervision of *Mr Nigel Wright*.

Date:/10 / 2016

Personal information

Age: tick on your age group.

- 1) 15 to ⑨. 2). 20 to ⑭. 3). 25 to ⑩.

Academic level: tick on your Academic level.

- 1). Year②. 2). Year③. 3). Year④.

Please rate your answer by choosing one of the following ranking numbers for each item:

Strongly agree = 5 / Agree = 4 / Neutral =3 / Disagree = 2 /strongly disagree =1.

	Item	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)
1	I have studied many courses in the foreign language department but I still am unable to write well in English. درست للعديد من مواد اللغة الانجليزية في قسم اللغات الاجنبية ولكنني لازلت غير قادر على الكتابة بشكل جيد باللغة الانجليزية				
2	I have good knowledge of English writing skills. لدي معرفة جيدة في الكتابة باللغة الانجليزية				
3	I think that I cannot write well because I lack vocabulary. اعتقد انني لا استطيع الكتابة لانني ليس لديه مفردات كافية				
4	I have learned how to write the main parts of a composition or an essay. لقد تعلمت على كيفية كتابة الاجزاء الرئيسية للمقال او التعبير باللغة الانجليزية				
5	I can write accurately full composition or essay in English with few grammatical mistakes. استطيع كتابة مقال او تعبير متكامل باللغة الانجليزية مع وجود بعض الأخطاء النحوية				
6	I have good knowledge about different kinds of writing strategies. لدي معرفة جيدة عن الأنواع المختلفة لإستراتيجيات الكتابة				
7	My vocabulary is sufficient to fully express my thoughts and ideas accurately. اعتقد انه لدي المفردات الكافية للتعبير عن افكاري ورئيتي بشكل كامل.				
8	I am able to write an organised composition or essay. اعتقد انني لا استطيع كتابة مقال او تعبير منظم باللغة الانجليزية				

9	I can write an accurate full composition or essay in English with few spelling mistakes. استطيع كتابة مقال او تعبير متكامل باللغة الانجليزية بدوا اخطاء املانية				
10	I have good knowledge about different essays writing styles and structures. ليس لدي معرفة جيدة بالاساليب والصيغ المختلفة لكتابة المقالات المختلفة				
11	I like writing class because I like writing in English. انا احب حصص الكتابة لانني احب الكتابة باللغة الانجليزية				
12	I think that writing in English is boring. اعتقد ان الكتابة باللغة الانجليزية مملة				
13	I feel that I have the courage to write English in the class. اشعر بان لدي الشجاعة بان اكتب باللغة الانجليزية في الفصل				
14	I feel nervous when I write in English. اشعر بالتوتر عندما اكتب باللغة الانجليزية				
15	I take the English writing study seriously. اخذ دراسته الكتابة باللغه الانجليزية بشكل جدي				
16	I think that most of the writing topics i asked to write about are interesting. اعتقد ان مواضيع الي طلب مني الكتابة عنها باللغة الانجليزية شيقه				
17	I think I can write like most other students. أعتقد أنني أستطيع أن أكتب مثل معظم الطلاب الآخرين				
18	I believe that writing is less important than other learning skills. اعتقد ان مهارة الكتابة باللغة الانجليزية اقل اهمية من مهارة التعلم الاخرى				
19	I feel that I have confidence to writing in English accurately. أشعر أن لدي ثقة في قدرتي على الكتابة بشكل جيد باللغة الإنجليزية				
20	I feel nervous to write in English language because I think that I will commit mistakes. أشعر بالتوتر لكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية لأنني أعتقد بأنني سوف ارتكب الأخطاء				
21	My main concern is passing the writing courses only. اهتمامي الاكبر هو فقط تجاوز مادة الكتابة فقط				
22	I think there is Lack of thrill and excitement in English writing activities. أعتقد أن هناك قلة من التشويق والإثارة في أنشطة الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية				
23	I avoid writing because I do not want my teachers to criticise me. أتحاشى الكتابة لأنني لا أريد أساتذتي أن ينتقوني				
24	I have fear of my English writing being evaluated because of the students' negative comments. اشعر بالخوف من تقييم كتابتي بسبب التعليقات السلبية من قبل الطلاب				
25	My main concern is to develop my English writing skills. اهتمامي الاكبر هو تطوير مهاراتي في الكتابة				
26	I think that teachers do not encourage students to write. أعتقد أن المعلمين لا يشجعون الطلاب على الكتابة				
27	I avoid writing because I do not want my classmates to laugh at my mistake. أتحاشى الكتابة لأنني لا أريد زملائي أن يسخر من أخطائي				
28	I have fear of my English writing being evaluated because of the teachers' negative comments. اشعر بالخوف من تقييم كتابتي بسبب التعليقات السلبية من قبل المعلمين				
29	I believe that the number of students in my writing class is too big. أعتقد ان عدد الطلاب في الفصل كثير جداً				
30	I think that the English writing skills textbooks taught at the department are difficult for me. أعتقد أن مناهج مهارة الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية التي تدرس في القسم صعبة بالنسبة لي				
31	I practice writing in class. أمارس الكتابة في الفصل				

32	The teacher does not give enough examples so I cannot write well. المعلم لا يعطي الكثير من الامثلة التوضيحية وبالتالي لا أستطيع أن أكتب جيداً.				
33	The teachers always give feedback on my writing. المعلم دائماً يعطي ملاحظات على كتابتي.				
34	In the foundation year I have only studied basic information about English writing. لقد درست فقط القليل من المعلومات الأساسية حول الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية في السنة التحضيرية.				
35	I am confused by the differences in English and Arabic language structures. لا أستطيع تمييز الاختلافات في البناء اللغوي بين اللغة العربية واللغة الانجليزية.				
36	I think that the English textbook in the department is more advanced and complicated. أعتقد أن منهج الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية في القسم هو أكثر تقدم وتعقيداً.				
37	Large classes restrict the quality of teacher feedback. الفصول التي تحتوي على عدد كبير من الطلاب تحد من جودة الملاحظات التي يقدمها المعلم للطالب في كتابة.				
38	Two courses of English writing skills are not insufficient. مادتين لمهارة الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية وحدها لا تكفي لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية				
39	I think that the English writing skills textbooks in the department contain only advance information about writing. أعتقد أن مناهج مهارة الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية التي تدرس في القسم تحتوي فقط على معلومات متقدمة في مهارة الكتابة				
40	I practice writing at home. أمارس الكتابة في المنزل.				
41	Writing skill teachers are concerned about covering the textbook quickly. يقوم المعلم بشرح المواضيع بشكل سريع وينصب إهتمامه في تغطية المنهج وانهاء المقرر.				
42	The teachers always explain the feedback on my writing explicitly. المعلم دائماً يشرح ويفسر ملاحظات على كتابتي بشكل واضح ودقيق.				
43	The textbook in the foundation year prepares students for proper writing at university. أعتقد أن كتاب اللغة الإنجليزية في السنة التحضيرية يؤهل الطلاب جيداً للكتابة الصحيحة في الجامعة				
44	When I write in English, I think in Arabic. عندما أكتب باللغة الإنجليزية، أقوم بصياغة أفكارى باللغة العربية.				
45	There is a gap between the English writing information in the textbook at the foundation year and the English writing information in the textbook at the foreign languages department. هناك فجوة في المعلومات المتعلقة بالكتابة في منهج اللغة الإنجليزية في السنة التحضيرية المعلومات المتعلقة بالكتابة في منهج اللغة الإنجليزية في قسم اللغة الأجنبية				
46	The English writing skills textbooks used at the department are above the students English writing abilities. أعتقد أن مناهج مهارة الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية التي تدرس في القسم اعلى من مستويات الطلاب في الكتابة				
47	Teachers are not actively involved in writing activities in classes with big number of students. المعلمين لا يتفاعلون بنشاط في أنشطة الكتابة في الفصول الدراسية المكتظة بعدد كبير من الطلاب.				
48	The teachers encourage me to practice writing whether in class or at home to improve writing skills. يقوم المعلمون بتشجيعي لممارسة الكتابة سواء في الصف أو في المنزل لتحسين مهارات الكتابة.				
49	My teachers use only one traditional way of teaching writing. المعلمون يستخدمون طريقة تقليدية واحدة في تدريس مهارة الكتابة				
50	I think that the English textbook does not provide students with different writing strategies which are used in university studies. أعتقد أن الكتاب الانجليزية لا يوفر للطلاب استراتيجيات الكتابة المختلفة التي تستخدم في الدراسات الجامعية				

51	I think writing in English is challenging because I have to write from left to right. أعتقد لأنني أكتب من اليسار إلى اليمين في اللغة الإنجليزية مما يجعل الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية أكثر صعوبة بالنسبة لي.				
52	As EFL student, I would prefer to study intensive English language courses in the first year in the department instead of the foundation year. كطالب لغة إنجليزية أفضل دراسة اللغة الإنجليزية بشكل مكثف في أول سنة في قسم اللغات بدلاً من دراسة السنة التحضيرية.				
53	The English writing skills textbooks taught at the department do not start gradually from beginners to advance levels. أعتقد أن مناهج مهارة الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية التي تدرس في القسم لا تبدأ تدريجياً من المستوى المبتدئ إلى المستوى المتقدم.				
54	Large classes mean teachers cannot give equal attention to students. الفصول الدراسية المكتظة بعدد كبير من الطلاب تعني بأن المعلمين لا يستطيعون إعطاء كل الطلاب تركيز واهتمام متساوي .				
55	English writing courses do not meet the skills requirements of the English language students. المواد المقررة لتعليم مهارة الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية لا تفي بمتطلبات طالب اللغة الإنجليزية .				
56	The English writing textbooks in the department are not relevant to what students need to develop English writing. لا توجد علاقة بين مناهج مهارة الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية التي تدرس في القسم وما يحتاجه الطالب لتنمية مهارة الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية.				
57	I am overwhelmed with many written exercises. أنا مثقل بكثرة التمارين الكتابية العديدة.				
58	My teachers use up-to-date English writing teaching methods. المعلمون يستخدمون طرق التدريس الحديثة في تدريس مهارة الكتابة.				
59	The teacher asks me to correct/edit what my classmates write. المعلم يطلب مني تصحيح / تحرير ما يكتبه زملائي.				
60	I think that the English textbook in the foundation year does not give students information of different kinds of essays writing structures which students need in their university studies. أعتقد أن كتاب اللغة الإنجليزية في السنة التحضيرية لا يعطي الطلاب المعلومات عن الأنواع والأساليب المختلفة لكتابة المقالات التي يحتاجها الطلاب في الدراسات الجامعية				
61	My English writing improved because of the other unofficial references the teacher gave us. كتابتي باللغة الإنجليزية تطورت من خلال الكتب والمراجع الخارجية التي يزودنا بها المعلم وليس من خلال المنهج المقرر لدى القسم.				
62	Teacher opportunities to provide activities needed by students are limited by large classes. الفصول الدراسية المكتظة بعدد كبير من الطلاب تحد من فرص المعلم للقيام بالأنشطة والتمارين الكتابية اللازمة التي يحتاجها الطالب.				
63	There are no marks to encourage practice writing. لا يوجد درجات تحفيزية وتشجيعية لممارسة الكتابة.				
64	I think that the English textbook in the foundation year is very simple. أعتقد أن منهج اللغة الإنجليزية في السنة التحضيرية بسيط جداً.				
65	I think that the English writing textbooks do not meet the students' needs. أعتقد أن مناهج مهارة الكتابة باللغة لا يفي بمتطلبات واحتياجات الطالب.				
66	I would prefer to study English writing in a small class. أفضل أن أتعلم في فصول تحتوي على عدد قليل من الطلاب .				
67	Please tell me what are the key difficulties you faced in academic writing in English? Please answer this question in English. ماهي الصعوبات الجوهرية التي تواجهها في الكتابة الأكاديمية باللغة الإنجليزية ؟ الرجاء كتابة الإجابة باللغة الإنجليزية.				

				
68	<p>Please write for me a piece which tells me what would help you to write better in English. Please answer this part in English.</p> <p>الرجاء الكتابة عن العوامل التي قد تساعدك على تحسين كتابته باللغة الانجليزية؟ الرجاء كتابة الإجابة باللغة الانجليزية.</p> <p>.....</p>				
Thank you					