

# Challenges Face Arab Students in Writing Well-Developed Paragraphs in English

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## Abstract

This study aimed to investigate problems facing Palestinian Arab students from Israel who are majoring in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in developing well-written paragraphs in English. They usually transfer the stylistic features of their first language, Arabic to the target language, English. For example, they tend to write long sentences with coordinating conjunctions (Al-Khatib, 2001), repeat themselves and argue through presentation and elaboration (Almehmadi, 2013), and often talk around the topic and repeat phrases before stating the main points (Alsamadani, 2010). The data had been accumulated for the last fourteen years include samples of 205 students, which show similar repeated types of mistakes and errors made by the participants of the first year writing course. The accumulated data show that students face many problems in writing good topic as well as concluding sentences, supporting details by adding examples and reasons and using discourse markers appropriately. To help these learners write good samples of paragraphs in English, a variety of approaches such as contrastive analysis, error analysis, and the process approach have been employed. The findings indicated that by the end of their first school year, most of them succeed in writing topic and concluding sentences. However, (1) providing supporting details including examples and reasons is not fully mastered; (2) the style of English is not completely acquired: Some students continue transferring the style of Arabic writing; and (3) developing a cohesive paragraph using the right coordinators and transition words still needs a lot of practice.

**Keywords:** writing problems, paragraph development, methods of instruction

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 *The Difficulties of Writing among Arabic Speakers*

Generally speaking, writing is a difficult skill for native speakers and nonnative speakers alike because writers must balance multiple issues in their writing such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary and mechanics which means using the right punctuation, spelling and capitalization. Writing in a second language is even more demanding because it is “a complex, challenging, and difficult process” (Alsamadani, 2010) since writers are expected to produce written samples that are syntactically accurate, semantically acceptable and culturally appropriate. Arab students are not an exception. They face many difficulties writing well- developed paragraphs and essays in English. Since English and Arabic linguistic and orthographic systems differ, it is expected that Arab learners of English encounter difficulties learning English as a second/foreign language (Alsamadani, 2010). They usually transfer the stylistic features of Arabic as their first language. For example, they tend to write long sentences with coordinating conjunctions (Al-Khatib, 2001; Oshima & Hougeas cited in Almehmadi, 2012), repeat themselves and argue through presentation and elaboration (Johnstone as cited in Almehmadi, 2012). They often talk around the topic and repeat phrases before stating the main points (Dweik as cited in Alsamadani, 2010).

In addition, the degree of explicitness and implicitness of the message poses another difference between Arabic and English stylistics (Mohamed as cited in Mohamed & Omar, 2000). For instance, Arab writers usually avoid conveying their messages explicitly, assuming that readers are responsible for understanding the message. They

also tend to transfer their first modes and patterns of thinking in their first language.

Besides these difficulties, the emphasis of writing instruction for many years has been on the product rather than the process. Therefore, writing instructors emphasize grammar and punctuation rather than content and organization of ideas. Many students tell me they have been exposed to the rules of writing and grammar without developing their ability to express their ideas.

In general, Arab students including Palestinians face tremendous difficulties developing well-written paragraphs in English in terms of fluency, content and organization, and accuracy using the acceptable grammatical patterns, punctuation and spelling. My first year students, who are majoring in EFL in a B.Ed program in a teacher training college, have studied English for at least eight years and many of them have achieved an 85 or above grade on a 4 point English matriculation exam or a 5 point one, which includes an English composition. However, they still have major problems in three areas of English composition: sentence structure, paragraph structure, content and organization because they transfer their first language style of writing. For example, they tend to write long sentences, repeat themselves, use presentation and elaboration for the purpose of persuading the reader and use semantic and phonological parallelism.

Many research projects concerning problems of Arab learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in writing have concentrated on word and sentence levels following the structural approach of error and contrastive analysis. Other studies focused on the syntactic level such as the excessive use of the definite article “the” or the omission of the copula, the verb to be. However, this study focuses not only on the error sentence level, but also the paragraph development in terms of including a topic sentence, a concluding one and supporting details that are usually expressed implicitly in long clauses with excessive use of “and”, “also”, “which” and “that”. So cohesiveness will be also addressed in this paper.

### *1.2 The Importance of the Study*

It is important to mention that no studies have addressed specifically the writing of Palestinian Arab students from Israel. Reviewing the literature concerning problems facing Arabic speaking learning English and comparing them with the samples of my students show that they have similar features, if not identical. In addition, I came from the same background, and I have struggled myself making the same mistakes and errors in my English learning journey.

### *1.3 Theoretical Background*

Many studies were conducted in the last century to investigate errors made by Arabic-speaking EFL learners in their writing. Other recent studies show similar findings concerning Arab EFL students serious problems in writing English that would obscure their ability of expressing their thoughts on paper. They usually stem from first language interference (Ridha, 2012) and are also systematic and classifiable (Al-Buainain, 2007). These problems cover many areas such as syntax, morphology and spelling (Al-Buainain, 2007), semantics (Al-Shormani, 2010), and use of prepositions (Tahaineh, 2010).

Arab writers tend to use long sentences, repetition, presentation and elaboration (Johnstone as cited in Almehmadi, 2012). Repetition is presented by writing more synonyms in the same sentence (Johnstone as cited in Almehmadi, 2012). For instance, the phrase "demolition and destruction" could be repeated twice in one sentence to convey emphasis. In addition, they use the coordinating conjunctions “and” and “as” excessively, which are parallel to “wa” and “fa” in Arabic. Al-Khreshes (2011) analyzed the writing samples of 120 Jordanian students that included 426 errors which could be attributed to 1<sup>st</sup> language interference. They also prefer the use of coordination rather than subordination.

Another study was conducted by Al-Khatib (2001) who examined Jordanian students’ personal letter writing in English and found that Arab learners’ sentences are very lengthy. Earlier studies show similar findings such as the study conducted by Koch (1983) who analyzed English essays by Arabic-speaking English learners and found that majority of the learners made extensive use of devices such as parallelism and the repetition of the most powerful words and phrases. Her conclusion was that certain features of Arabic discourse are transferred, and this may influence Arab students to repeat words or phrases in English.

Presentation and elaboration are features of argumentation in Arabic prose. Thus, Arabic speaking students do not provide different perspectives in their arguments. Also, they often talk indirectly around the topic repeating phrases before stating the main points (Dweik as cited in Alsamadani, 2010). Moreover, Ibrahim & Nambiar (2011) found weakness in vocabulary and idea organization.

Similarly, Barry (2014) analyzed the writing samples of 38 Saudi students, 32 males and 6 females, attending a pre-academic program at Oakland University in Michigan. Data analysis included several categories like use of conjunctions, use of conventions of English expression and word order. Findings reveal excessive use of conjunctions, especially “and”.

Other research studies reveal problems in paragraphing and paragraph unity among Arab students writing in English. For instance, Khuwaileh and Al Shoumali (2000) analyzed the writing of Jordanian students in Arabic, their first language, and English as their second one. They reported that 55% of the students wrote compositions in their first language that lacked organization of thoughts and with no appropriate linking of ideas. Similar findings regarding the writing of Jordanian college students in terms of organization of ideas were reported by Lakkis and Abdel Malak (2002). In addition, Ahmed (2010) examined the writing of EFL Egyptian students and reported similar problems in terms of sequencing ideas and writing topic sentences.

In contrast, the guidelines mentioned in Straugh (2005) include that writing in English requires writers to start their paragraphs with a topic sentence and end it with a concluding one. The topic sentence is a general statement composed of a topic and a comment, which should be followed with some background information. Conclusions could be expressed in the following five types: 1) providing a restatement of the topic sentence, 2) a summary of the main points mentioned in the supporting details, 3) a look to the future, 4) a related thought that grows out of the body and 5) a combination of several types of conclusions (Strauch, 2005).

Examples and reasons are required to support the topic sentence. Structural parallelism is frequently used in sentences to underscore the similarity of ideas. Parallel grammatical structures are used to bind together a series of sentences expressing similar information.

Discourse markers are used to link between the ideas in the written text showing addition, examples, comparison and contrast, time, place or direction, and they indicate logical relationship (Transition Words and Phrases, 2015). They are essential for having cohesive written products. A study was conducted by Modhish (2012) on the use of discourse markers show that elaborative discourse markers followed by the inferential, contrastive and causative are the most frequent ones. Therefore, “and”, “also”, “but” and “so” are the most common discourse markers used in their writing samples.

## **2. Writing Instruction**

Teaching a second language is not easy, but it can be taught effectively with patience and hard work identifying the needs of the learners and inventing the right methodology to help them. Therefore, the writing instructor has, first of all, to study the problems and difficulties faced by his/her students in the process of learning English and to find the suitable tasks (Ansari, 2012).

Classroom instruction plays an important role dealing with errors. Different approaches, methods, strategies and techniques are recommended to help EFL learners write well in English. It is the teachers’ responsibility to adopt, modify or even develop remedial procedures and techniques that can minimize the learners’ errors and elevate their level. Students should always be encouraged to do remedial exercises in order to improve their writing ability. Brief grammar rules may be essential to help students realize the errors that result from overgeneralization and wrong parallelism (Al-Buainain, 2007).

Hunt et al. (2009) stress detailed instruction as one of the factors in effective teaching, which includes the teacher’s ability to explain exactly what students are expected to do and how they perform their tasks successfully. Similarly, Hall, and Verplaetse (2000) argue that teachers can make classroom learning effective playing a crucial role in enhancing the proficiency of language learners by acting as motivators, providers of accurate language models and evaluators. In addition, the task of teaching is important in language learning because only a teacher can diagnose the learners’ needs and problems to consequently help them learn a language that matches these needs (Corbett, 2003). Therefore, teachers are expected to employ activities that bring about language learning.

### *2.1 Contrastive Analysis*

Housen and Pierrard (2005) believe that most Arab students’ errors are due to performance mistakes, mother-tongue interference, or false intra-language analogy. Therefore, contrastive analysis which has been defined as “an inductive investigative approach based on the distinctive elements in a language” (Glossary of Linguistic Terms, 2004) is a relevant approach in this context. According to Howatt & Widdowson (2004), this analysis is used in Applied Linguistics to understand the differences and similarities of sentence structures

between two or more languages. Teachers use contrastive analysis to understand the transfer and shift from one language to another and to compare the foreign language with the native one in order to adopt methods and techniques to meet the needs of the individual student (Byram, 2000; Gass & Selinker, 2008). Contrasting both languages is significant in teaching the target language since it benefits teachers in understanding the difference between the basic grammars of the two languages. Based on these analyses, teachers will be able to predict errors or difficulties in order to take care of them.

Transfer happens in two forms: positive and negative. Positive transfer occurs when the structure of two languages is similar; it results in the accurate construction of a language. Negative transfer, on the other hand, occurs when learners use incorrect structures into a new language, due to grammatical differences between L1 and L2 that are not understood by the learner. An example from the Arabic language can be used to better understand the negative transfer is the copula omission (Benmamoun, 2000).

Employing contrastive analysis in teaching writing is required to remind the learners from time to time that they make mistakes because of the influence of their mother tongue. If they are not reminded of this, they will revert to the use of their mother tongue very often, specifically whenever they fail to identify a specific grammatical rule or a particular word of the second language. They will understand that literal translation may not work in all cases. They might also understand that reality can be seen from several different perspectives and that human minds formulate concepts in different and unique fashions. They will realize that their mother tongue works differently from the second language they are learning.

### *2.2 Error Analysis*

Error analysis is a technique accounted for almost all errors made by the second language learners including those that result from the first language learning and others which are not related to the learners native language. It should be clear here that error analysis is used as a technique to study learners' errors since it provides data from which inferences about the language learning process can be made. It helps writing instructors and learners as well. The former would help them learn more about the complexity of the writing process of their learners, and the latter will assist the learners be consciously aware of their problems to overcome them. Thus, they are different from mistakes which are unsystematic deviations (Coder, 1981).

Dulay et al. (1982) discuss four types of errors: developmental, inter-lingual, ambiguous and others errors. Developmental intra-lingual errors are "similar to those made by children learning a target language as their first language" (p. 165). The third type is ambiguous errors, that could be classified either as developmental or inter-lingual since they reflect the learner's native language structure, and at the same time, they are of the type found in the speech of children acquiring their first language. The last type of errors is categorized as others. Dulay and Burt (1973) classified such errors as "unique". Errors of this type are items that do not fit into any other category. Furthermore, they are unique to second language learners.

In addition to first language interference, overgeneralization and insufficient knowledge of the target language could be considered as other reasons for language errors that appear in the writing Arab learners of English (Ancker, 2000).

### *2.3 The Process Approach*

The process approach is also recommended for teaching writing because the emphasis is on the process of writing itself, not on the product (Sun & Feng, 2009). Thus, writers should be trained to constantly ask themselves how to write and how to get writing started. They should be also trained to generate ideas for writing, think of the purpose and audience, and write multiple drafts in order to present written products that express their own ideas. Teachers who use this approach give students time to develop ideas and get feedback on the content of what they write in their drafts because writing becomes a process of discovery for them as they discover new ideas and new language forms to express them. Adopting the process approach requires teachers to give students a greater responsibility for their own learning through making decisions about genre and choice of topics besides collaborating while writing. During the writing process, students should be engaged in pre-writing, planning, drafting, and post-writing activities.

### *2.4 Free Writing*

Another recommended approach is the free-writing one, which stresses quantity rather than quality (Some Approaches to Writing, 2007). Teachers who employ this approach assign vast amounts of free writing on given topics providing only minimal correction emphasizing content and fluency rather than accuracy and form. When

ideas appear on the page, grammatical accuracy and organization follow. Thus, teachers would begin their classes by asking students to write freely on any topic without worrying about grammar and spelling for five or ten minutes. Teachers do not correct these pieces of free writing, but they simply read them and may comment on the ideas the writer expressed. In return, some students may express their desire to read their own writing aloud to class. Considering audience and content is also important in this approach.

To support the course participants improve their writing, exposing them to authentic English through providing comprehensible input by watching the news in English, reading short articles from newspapers, discussing their content and learning the new vocabulary would be very helpful.

### **3. The Writing Course**

#### *3.1 Describing the Book*

The first annual writing course in their studies is offered to help them develop a paragraph in English, which is composed of a topic sentence, a concluding one and supporting details in terms of reasons and examples that are well expressed in cohesive paragraphs. The book is called "Writers at Work: The Short Composition", which includes samples of short compositions of two to three paragraphs in English and a variety of exercises for helping the students to develop their paragraphs. The book constitutes of nine chapters, but the following five are only covered in this course: Writing about a Person, Narrating a Personal Experience, Providing Examples, Supplying Reasons and Supporting with Parallel Points. In addition, the participants of this course practice writing persuasive paragraphs almost at the end of the school year.

#### *3.2 Requirements*

In this writing course the participants are expected to write ten paragraphs throughout the academic year. The process approach is employed. Therefore, the students are expected to write, revise, edit and submit the draft for three times before it is graded.

To extend the lexical stock of the learners in order to express themselves in their written products, they are required to read assigned articles from English magazines and newspapers. They are also expected to answer questions about the content and underline at least five new words that they have learned from the article. In addition, the content is discussed in class, and sometimes they use the new words in sentences. Moreover, short movies of news from the website of the CNN are shown to expose the participants to authentic English. After watching the news and answering questions, the students write what they remember from the news and share their writing with each other.

Forming groups is one of most employed strategies in this course. Usually the learners are seated in groups of four to discuss the samples in the book, to compare their answers and to do in-class activities such as completing paragraphs, practicing free writing or analyzing mistakes. To provide ample opportunities of writing, three journal entries are required each semester. Contrastive and error analysis are frequently used in order to help the participants be consciously aware of their mistakes and problems in writing.

After reading and discussing the syllabus in the first day, the students are required to write a paragraph about their choice of studying English at a teacher training college. After they complete writing the paragraph, they are asked to compare their sample with the one provided in the book. Their immediate response would be that the sample in the book is clear and straight to the point. However, they are not able to indicate the differences between the two samples. Then I start analyzing the structure of the paragraph indicating that it has a topic sentence, supporting details in the form of examples and reasons, and a conclusion. It is not expected to acquire the form of the paragraph in English from this analysis. Therefore, I keep reminding them consciously of the importance of including a topic sentence and a concluding one. Presenting their good samples of topic sentences in class is commonly employed to highlight their successes. Then presenting the inappropriate samples is an attempt to help the pupils realize why these samples are not appropriate. Also, they are reminded constantly of the components of a topic sentence, topic and a comment. Sometimes they are required to sit in groups of four and rewrite these sentences to meet the requirements of good topic sentences. Other times, I write the inappropriate sentences on the board making sure to involve the learners by pausing or asking for one word to revise these sentences.

Similarly, their mistakes are collected on a weekly basis, typed without their names and printed to be discussed in class; however, in the last three years they are sent to them on-line through the website of the course to be analyzed and corrected in class. They are given the chance to work in pairs trying to identify the source of the

errors and correct them. However, the learners show reluctance many times since they are unable to indicate the reasons for making such mistakes. When they face such difficulties, I interfere immediately by asking specific questions about the nature of these mistakes. For instance, the students are asked to underline the verb in the sentence? They are also required to indicate the type of clause in complex sentences, dependent or independent.

Indicating the type of sentences, simple, compound and complex ones, is another strategy that is used very often. Besides indicating the types and looking at examples of each, I work with the learners to change their long sentences following the structure of these types.

To help the students take more responsibility in their writing, they are encouraged to read aloud the draft before submitting it in order to feel the mistakes. Sometimes they are given time in class to do that as a matter of practice. In addition, they are usually seated in groups or in pairs and are required to work collaboratively.

At the end of the school year, the participants are asked to compare between their first drafts and the last one in terms of providing a topic sentence, a concluding one, examples and reasons. Also, they are expected to indicate the level of their progress in terms of using well-structured and connected sentences.

#### **4. Methods**

I have been teaching writing for first year students who are majoring in EFL instruction at a teacher training college in the central part of Israel for the last fourteen years. To help these students write better sentences and paragraphs in English, the process approach and the free writing approach were employed. In addition, different techniques including contrastive analysis and error analysis were constantly used. Moreover, exposing the participants to authentic English through reading short articles from English magazines and newspapers and watching the news was an essential part of the instruction.

##### *4.1 Participants*

The participants are first year students in the B.Ed program, majoring in EFL. They all come from the same geographical area; most of them are females. Their age ranges from 19 till 21.

These students usually start their college studies immediately after finishing high school, and they demonstrate better oral skills than writing. In fact, the majority of them have a very limited experience in writing in English prior to their college studies due to the fact that writing is almost neglected in Arab high schools in Israel.

##### *4.2 Data Analysis*

Collecting and analyzing their mistakes have been carried out on a weekly basis during the fourteen years. The accumulated data have been analyzed for the paragraph level errors to address the three components of the paragraph: topic sentence, concluding sentence and supporting details. The sentence level errors included the following subcategories: syntactic, semantic and stylistic. For example, when the sentence lacks a verb, it falls under the syntactic category. The error is considered semantic when the words are not used in the appropriate context. Stylistic refers to the transfer of the Arabic stylistics in English.

#### **5. Results**

##### *5.1 Inappropriate Topic Sentences*

- (1) We all agree that sometimes the government makes bad laws and policies.
- (2) Most of the laws that the legislature legislates in Israel are good.
- (3) I believe that watching movies really benefits us with many aspects of our lives.
- (4) I love watching movies, Especially, English movies, because these movies are awesome.
- (5) Watching movies has a lot of positive benefits on our life and mind, that's not matter what movie's genre is drama, horror or tragedy.

##### *5.2 Supporting Details*

- (1) It is incredible that we can learn about the other cultures, the things that people around the world face, their thinking ways and also their lifestyle when they are immigrants and out of their country.
- (2) At the beginning I thought that I know a lot about immigrants and immigrant writers but, I was totally wrong, because at the course I've faced many immigrant (Arab) writers that I hadn't even heard about them, and there were also writers I've truly heard about them but I didn't have right information about them.

(3) This course also gave me the chance to realize how blessed I am and that my family is very important, it has helped me establish my own views and how close are we to each other, this has shaped my view that everyone should try to get along and understand each other.

(4) The second reason is that people who's studying abroad become familiar with new cultures, traditions, languages and friends and the most important reason is that Abroad, people can learn whatever they like or want to learn because abroad there's no psychometry exam which is an obstacle for most of the people there in Israel, especially Arabs.

(5) Another reason is that travelling for one semester to America is something entertainment and free, I enjoy meeting people from different cultures, and being their friends is so nice and the trip gives me the chance to try new things we don't have in our country.

(6) Another example happened five months ago on the bus, it was full of people and one seat left, kairi leg was hurt her and she needed to set but she left her seat to an old woman who came directly after us.

(7) For example, the school environment.

To print, to cut and also the material.

#### *Concluding Sentences*

(1) I think that there is a need for issuing some laws against these annoying sources.

(2) I think that there must be an immediate solution to control this kind of noise.

(3) I know it is impossible to cancel the noise pollution, but I hope that we will do something to decrease of it, in order to live in a quiet environment.

(4) Well, I've had enough, so from now I will try to change this bad situation to feel more comfortable in my life.

(5) I hope that they will solve their problems and understand that there are other people who live in this neighborhood beside them. So, ever body could have and enjoy quite time.

(6) To sum up, I would like to emphasize the importance of watching movies and also of avoiding those that might mislead us.

#### **6. Discussion**

Usually the first year students find it difficult especially at the beginning to write a general statement that includes a topic and a comment as it is required in English. Instead, they transfer the style of Arabic which is characterized of being indirect, very personal and emotional most of the time.

The five samples of the topic sentences show that the students are not fully acquainted with the style of such sentences. First of all, three of them are personalized. They start either with the "I" as the first person pronoun or "we". Still, they are not able to form general statements that include a topic and a comment. The first part of the last sample meets the requirements for having a good topic sentence. However, the writer felt the need to add another clause to clarify the general statement. Similarly, providing a concluding sentence poses another difficulty to Arab students. The first two samples are close to the way a concluding sentence is expressed. However, the writers felt the need of personalizing the issue by adding "I think that". The rest of the sentences are not only personalized, but also transferred from the style of Arabic. These samples of topic as well as concluding sentences are in keeping of previous ones that had been mentioned by Ahmed (2010) and Dweik (as cited in Alsamadani, 2010) that Arab writers in English often write around the topic and repeat phrases before stating the main points.

Similarly, the students transfer the style of Arabic providing supporting details to the topic sentences. Despite the fact the students use signals to indicate reasons and examples following the samples in the book, the first three sentences show that the students neither provide examples nor reasons to support their topic sentences. Still, they write long and sometimes run-on sentences to illustrate their points. In addition, they tend to write a series of clauses that neither follow the punctuation system in English, nor the sentence structure. Words like "and", "which" and "that" besides commas are used excessively. These findings are in line with previous findings mentioned by Derrick and Guma (1985) and Koch (1983). In addition, they happen repeatedly since they are transferred from the native language style as it has been mentioned by different authors like Abisamara (2003), Almehmadi (2012) and Mahmoud (2005). In addition, in a paragraph of five to seven sentences, the students feel the need to repeat their ideas more than once rather being concise and straightforward aiming either to highlight

the importance of their ideas or to convince the reader of their argument. These findings are similar to those that had been mentioned by Al-Khatib (2001).

In addition, including supporting details using the three types of English, simple, compound and complex poses another difficulty for Arab students. In this sense, the argument of Ostler (1987); Al-Khatib (2001); Oshima and Houge (1991) (as cited in Almeahadi, 2012) regarding the tendency for writing long sentences with inappropriate use of coordinating conjunctions is relevant here. It also seems that writing cohesive paragraphs through the use of transition words such as “in addition” for adding relevant information or “in contrast” for highlighting differences is a big challenge for Arab students. Still, some learners continue writing long clauses that neither follow sentence nor paragraph structure in English using “and”, “also”, “so” and “but” excessively. These findings correlate with those mentioned by Modhish (2012) who mentioned that the most common discourse markers are the elaborative followed by inferential, contrastive and causative.

They have learned to include reasons and examples. Therefore, they follow the samples in the book of how to provide reasons and examples. However, they are not proficient enough to continue the sentence in English properly. It could be concluded that the argument of the writers in these sentences is done through presentation and elaboration as it had been mentioned by (Derrick & Gmuca, 1985; Koch, 1983).

In addition, the details were not clear enough. Analyzing the sentences of supporting details show that the writers mention things in general assuming readers would understand them. The following phrases illustrate this point: 1) the things that people around the world face, 2) people can learn whatever they like or want to learn, and 3) establish my views. It is not clear which things people face, which subjects to be studied and which views are formed and in which context. These examples concur with the argument of Mohamed (as cited in Mohamed & Omar, 2000) regarding the degree of explicitness and implicitness of the message among Arab writers that could be related to the differences between Arabic and English stylistics.

The last two examples lack a verb. It sounds natural for Arab students not to include a verb in every sentence because sentences have two forms in Arabic; one type includes a verb and another one does not. The other two dependent clauses are not followed by complete ones to form complex sentences. Again, it does not sound odd to Arabic speakers to have such sentences since they transfer the structure of clauses in Arabic in their English sentences (Al-Buainain, 2007).

This study was conducted on Palestinian Arab students, citizens of Israel and members of a minority group, who learn English as a third language, after learning Arabic as their L1 and Hebrew as L2. Their mistakes are similar to those reported by different researchers who studied problems facing Arab students writing in English in Arab countries. This similarity indicates the influence of Arabic as their first language on learning English as a third one. In addition, it seems that the uniqueness of their position as a minority in Israel who learn English as a third language, not second like students in Arab countries, does not affect the types of mistakes they make.

This study is limited since it is conducted in one educational setting in the central part of Israel. It should be expanded to include first year students majoring in EFL in other teacher training colleges in different regions of Israel. In addition, a further study should include subjects from similar educational institutions in the West Bank and Gaza in an attempt to compare between the writing of Palestinian students from different regions under different political systems. The new study should investigate the students' essays, not paragraphs and their writing in their first language aiming to find not only first language interference, but also the influence of the fact that Palestinian from Israel students learn English as a third language while the other Palestinian students from the West Bank and Gaza learn English as a second one. First cultural interference and variables that affect this interference should be investigated too. Furthermore, conducting a broader study to include students from different Arab countries comparing their writing with the writing of Palestinian students from Israel would add to the literature in this field.

## **7. Implications for Teaching**

The above examples show that helping Arab students to acquire the stylistics of English for developing well-written paragraphs is not easy because they transfer the style of their first language. In addition, they lack the necessary vocabulary for expressing their thoughts appropriately. To do so, students should be aware from the beginning of the differences between writing paragraphs in English and in Arabic. Contrastive analysis would consciously help them realize the differences in order to avoid making mistakes. In addition, providing comprehensible input through exposing them to authentic use of English employing through watching the news

in English, reading short newspapers articles, discussing their contents and analyzing samples of good paragraphs would be very helpful. Moreover, error analysis would be very useful too because they will be provided with opportunities to think about their errors and the reasons behind making these mistakes through time.

Writing instructors should consciously and constantly remind the students of the need for depersonalizing their writing by trying to use the pronouns “I” and “we” less. Similarly, inserting transition words to cohesively unite the ideas should be also done consciously and constantly. Students should be always reminded to do that through in and out class practice.

Similar techniques are employed to help the learners provide appropriate concluding sentences following the five types of conclusions which have been mentioned earlier. When the students are reminded frequently to compare between their concluding sentences and the samples in the book, they will be encouraged to work with a partner to improve these concluding sentences.

In addition, adopting the process-writing approach would be very helpful because the learners would be given multiple opportunities for working on their drafts passing the seven recommended stages starting from selecting a topic and ending with sharing their writing with others.

Furthermore, writing instructors should be aware of the fact that the process of helping Arab students develop good paragraphs in English is long and demanding. Being acquainted with the problems that Arab learners have and the reasons behind them would help the writing instructors better understand the mistakes and find useful ways to deal with them.

In conclusion, Arab students in EFL writing classes should be given ample opportunities for practice in and outside the classroom in order to be acquainted with the style of English for writing essays appropriately using the right expressions, cohesively uniting their thoughts besides considering the audience. In addition, adopting techniques like contrastive and error analysis, different approaches as the process and the free writing approaches would help these learners overcome their difficulties in writing and start producing better writing samples.

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