RICHTMANN
P U B L I S H I N G

Research Article

Writing Issues in ESL and their Potential Solutions: Case Study IMCO's Foundation Students

Zouhaier Slimi[1,2]

Farah Al Alawai[1]

Huda Al Alyani[1]

Sharifa Al Abri[1]

Fatema Abdallah Al-Farsi[1]

Kawkab Al Balushi[1]

[1]National University IMCO, PO Box 532, PC 322,
Falaj Al Qabail, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman,
Al Sohar, Oman
[2]Deusto University, Unibertsitate Etorb.,
24, 48007 Bilbo, Bizkaia, Spain

Abstract

This paper studies the common writing mistakes committed by IMCO's foundation students. Therefore, it supports students in addressing their issues and prepares them for their degree studies. The study investigates the common writing mistakes at the foundation level (A1 to B1). To investigate writing problems in linguistic, cultural, educational, and social contexts. To recommend potential dynamic solutions to support IMCO's students and other learners to write better. A team of experts in English language teaching with experience of five to fifteen years in the field conducted an experimental study through the first semester of the academic year 2021–22 on 5 groups, each made of 20 to 27 students. The experiment recorded the common mistakes committed by learners on an excel sheet for ten weeks. The paper also used bibliometric analysis to map errors on the international level by analyzing articles from five recent years (from 2005 to 2022) from Scopus via VOSviewer. Data collected was analyzed via Yale DHlab Raw Graph 2.0 beta. Findings reveal that the main mistakes committed by learners are linked to spelling, punctuation, irrelevant ideas, thesis statement writing, topic, sentence, use of the verbal sentence, verb-subject agreement, run-on sentences, structure, layout issues, and plagiarism issues. Several factors contribute to these issues, including the impact of language one on language two, lack of reading, motivation, and the impact of online learning. Findings also reveal that although lecturers use a student-centred approach, they lack high-tech skills in dealing with writing issues, requiring apps, technology, and artificial intelligence. The paper is valuable as it adds value to teaching productive skills to non-native English speakers, and it combines the use of scientific research methods.

Keywords: Foundation; students; writing; issues, solutions

E-ISSN 2240-0524
ISSN 2239-978X

Journal of Educational and Social Research
www.richtmann.org

Vol 12 No 6
November 2022

1. Introduction

Writing is one of the critical skills students must master to be good at any language (Hilma et al., 2021). However, mastering the writing of any foreign language is not an easy task as there are many constraints linked to the influence of the mother language, the difficulties in apprehending a new language, learning and teaching styles, and the intrinsic issues related to the learner him or herself (Yu, 2020). This paper focuses on the central issues facing Omani students at the foundation level at the International Maritime College Oman regarding writing skills. The study is meant to investigate the common issues in writing, provide solutions for these issues, and mainly share experiences, enhance the learning process, strengthen foundation students' abilities, and prepare them for their degree studies. The study is a self-reflection for the contributing staff to diagnose the teaching methods, and the remedies provided and opt for more efficient approaches that suit the new generation, the technological changes, and the learning requirements of the 21st century.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Common writing issues in ESL

In order to compare the effectiveness of two research tools—a mobile reading app (experimental group) and an online article (control group)—and assess whether students' language proficiency, Zamborova & Klimova (2021) attempted to identify and categorize errors made by non-native students in written summaries. Due to this, they looked at 29 EFL Slovak students' written performance in 29 written summaries by analyzing linguistic and stylistic mistakes. Findings showed that lexical (word collocations), stylistic (text coherence, slang terms, and punctuation), grammatical (determiners), and lexico-stylistic errors are the most difficult parts of writing summaries (prepositions). Thirty-eight per cent of pupils in both groups improved their B2 to C1 levels overall (11 students). According to the findings, both strategies—the reading app and online articles—effectively enhance students' writing. The study is innovative since it contributes to the literature by revealing mistakes made by EFL Slovak students who write summaries using contemporary technologies (Zamborova & Klimova, 2021).

Chang (2021) looked at the linguistic features of L2 classroom-based teacher-student writing conferences and subsequent student revision in the same context. Four non-native students and a non-native teacher discussed two summary and critical review tasks during the writing conference. The study examined eight filmed conference sessions for negotiation, scaffolding configurations, and discourse issues (language use vs content/rhetoric). More content and rhetorical issues were closely examined, and it became clear that task kinds and conversation themes interact. Both tasks' scaffolding and discussion setups were discovered to be comparable. Negotiation and scaffolding were equally crucial in discussions about content and rhetoric, although scaffolding predominated in discussions about language use. The quality of the conversations was more critical than the amount when it came to mean and student correction. Although this study offers insights into the research, it only dealt with pupils that were, in some way, linguistically advanced. Non-extensive scaffolding, according to Chang (2021), supported successful revision. He emphasized that students' prior knowledge and classroom instruction show the dynamics of writing assignments, conferences, and student revision (Chang, 2021).

Researchers in second language acquisition and TESOL have long found inspiration from the work of Kessler et al. (2021), who examined the impact of topic familiarity on the future writing performance of authors using a second language. However, the results of earlier studies have frequently been questioned due to methodological flaws (such as a lack of inter-rater reliability and little to no control over essential variables). Reexamining a significant study by He and Shi (2012), who looked at the impacts of ESL students' topic familiarity on their writing ability as evaluated by text quality, complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF), Kessler et al. (2021) noted several flaws in this

conceptual replication (He & Shi, 2012). The researchers above emphasized the parallels and contrasts in their findings and highlighted the distinctions in the study designs (such as the CAF measurements and statistical analysis performed). Finally, they make a case for additional replication studies in this area (Kessler et al., 2021).

Similarly, Setyowati & Sukmawan (202) examined how using news items as authentic sources affected essay writing abilities. With 18 fourth-semester students enrolled in an essay writing course at Indonesian institutions, they conducted an experimental study using a single-group pretest-posttest design. These students were randomly chosen and given 12 meetings in which they received instruction in a hybrid learning setting. The first four meetings took place in a regular, in-person classroom format. The COVID-19 outbreak forced the remaining meetings to be held online. Data was gathered using tests and documentation. Before being made available, the instructional materials, pre-and post-test designs, and administrative procedures underwent testing and validation. News pieces addressing world themes, including disease, racial inequality, gender, and environmental protection, made up the authentic materials. The pupils' writing was evaluated by two raters using the Jacobs ESL Composition Profile. The researchers used IBM SPSS 25 to analyze the data. No significant difference was found between students' writing scores before and after using news as authentic materials ($p = .959 > 0.05$), according to the results (Setyowati & Sukmawan, 2021).

In addition, Lee et al. study (2021) examined the impact of a longer time constraint on the strength of L2 writers' arguments. In a counterbalanced design, 32 adult ESL students produced two essays in response to predetermined prompts, one in thirty minutes and the other in forty-five minutes. The 64 submissions were analytically reviewed by four members of the team who have received training. The results show that the essays produced in 45 minutes obtained a much higher subscore on reasoning and an overall score than those submitted in 30 minutes. Using eight pairs of essays, interviews with evaluators revealed how the extra 15 minutes changed different aspects of argumentation depending on the overall level of writing, with the highest level of argumentation addressing every aspect of the issue by providing adequate support for a middle class and effectively handling the prompt for a low level. According to a post-test questionnaire, most students said the extra 15 minutes were helpful for concept organization and brainstorming. The article discusses the implications of using argumentative writing assessments and improving analytical descriptors for argumentation (Lee et al., 2021).

Niemelä & Naukkarinen (2022) focused on academic writing and communication skills in English because they are essential for success in the international scientific community. According to Niemelä and Naukkarinen (2022), Finnish engineering students struggle to write scientific articles in English for foreign venues. Therefore, these skills should be improved at all academic levels to aid students in becoming subject-matter experts. In their essay, they explore engineering students' challenges in academic writing and suggest how to make the process easier for them. The article clarifies the context and circumstances in which engineering students function and communication issues. Niemelä and Naukkarinen (2022) conducted an interpretive analysis of writings produced by engineering students in Finland. Their analysis for qualitative textual analysis was carried out using systemic functional linguistics. Their study explored contextual learning's role in academic writing training. Through textual analysis, the challenges and issues in academic writing were revealed. Niemelä and Naukkarinen (2022) deduced that challenges included a lack of familiarity with grammar, publication procedures and terminology issues. It also involves a lack of knowledge of educational discourse strategies like hedging, feedback handling, and cohesive devices. To help students build their academic communication abilities within their discipline, guidance and training in these areas should be included throughout their engineering education. Course reports can improve academic writing, like thesis writing, reasoning, writing abilities, and database utilization. Situated learning also requires individual dialogue (Niemelä & Naukkarinen, 2021).

Additionally, Jitpraneechai (2019) analyzed the academic writing of Thai and native English-speaking university students, concentrating on the complexity of noun phrases by contrasting their argumentative English essays. Both sets of writers heavily relied on attributive adjectives, nouns as

premodifiers, and prepositional phrases as postmodifiers when using manually identified and coded prenominal and postnominal modifiers, with no discernible differences in prenominal modifier usage. The two datasets differed in their usage of several prepositional phrases as postmodifiers and prepositional phrases with abstract meanings. These were used more frequently by native English speakers than by Thai students and are believed to be acquired later in life. The results of this study may have teaching value and aid in understanding the complexity of noun phrases used by Thai undergraduates (Jitpraneechai, 2019).

Similarly, Sarte & Gnevsheva (2022) the proficiency and effects of noun phrase complexity in argumentative essays by English language learners in a constructed-response task. Sarte & Gnevsheva (2022) argued that noun modifiers were counted in 64 pieces because they matched 16 different grammatical structures at differing levels of phrasal complexity. Sarte & Gnevsheva (2022) studied the use of noun modifiers in a constructed response task where the topic may have an impact and by building on most of the earlier research on noun phrasal complexity in writing. The group with the lowest competence employed fewer noun modifiers than the group with the best skill at all phrasal complexity levels. Additionally, Sarte & Gnevsheva (2022) think that writings with more challenging topics utilized more postmodifiers than premodifiers and more noun modifiers at higher stages. Similarly, noun modifiers at lower places were more subject to topic effects, indicating that their utilization heavily relied on the topical criteria. The results indicate that essay subjects can affect noun phrase complexity and that a fine-grained study of noun phrasal complexity can distinguish between second language writers of different ability levels (Sarte & Gnevsheva, 2022).

However, Zaytseva et al. (2022) handled the writing problem from a different angle than vocabulary. Their study assessed the second language's (L2) vocabulary growth in writing in two learning contexts: formal training at home and a three-month stay abroad. Before and after each learning session, 30 advanced English speakers of Catalan and Spanish completed a written composition to provide data. These compositions underwent quantitative analysis on various lexical metrics, including diversity, density, sophistication, and accuracy. Additionally, baseline data from 29 native English speakers who completed the identical task were compared. Our results show that not all components of lexical proficiency in L2 writing grow consistently between the two learning environments. Lexical accuracy and diversity improve during FI and SA learning periods. However, SA seems to be especially helpful for lexical diversity. Regarding spelling and lexical sophistication, learners behave more like natives after SA. Considering the selected metrics for the study (Zaytseva et al., 2022).

2.2 Possible solutions for writing issues in ESL

Al Maawali (2022) believes that there is a relative lack of evidence to support some expectations for improving writing experiences during COVID-19 using online and remote writing mediums, despite the general adoption of connectivism pedagogies as essential to 21st-century learning. Al Maawali (2022), using the lens of connectivism learning theory, investigated how students interpret their writing to better understand the meaning-making process on a personal and societal level. Al Maawali (2022) employed a case study methodology and gathered data from 43 students in a first-year enhanced language training (ELT) programme. These students' IELTS scores for English proficiency ranged from 4.0 to 4.5. According to the results, integrating cognitive process theory and connectivism learning theory into writing education improves students' reflective practises and comprehension of their writing styles. The collaborative writing exercises also improved the understanding of the student's approach to text construction. The results of this study suggest that writer's blocks for beginning writers of English as a Second Language (ESL) have lessened since the connectivism learning theory helped students compose longer pieces than usual. This study advises educators to combine connectivism pedagogies with a reflective writing strategy (Al Maawali, 2022).

Al Maawali (2022) adds that connectivism pedagogies are widely acknowledged as essential to 21st-century learning. He also thinks there is a relative lack of evidence to support some expectations

for improving writing experiences during COVID-19 using online and remote writing mediums. Through the lens of connectivism learning theory, Al Maawali (2022) explored how students interpreted their writing and tried to examine the meaning-making process from a personal and societal perspective. Forty-three students enrolled in a first-year enhanced language training (ELT) programme provided the study's data, and they had English competence ranging from 4.0 to 4.5 on the IELTS band scale. According to Al Maawali's (2022) research, integrating cognitive process theory and connectivism learning theory into writing teaching improves students' reflective practises and comprehension of their writing styles. The collaborative writing exercises improved the comprehension of the student's approach to text elaboration. Writer's blocks for English as a Second Language (ESL) newbie writers appeared to have lessened. According to this study, the connectivism learning theory helped students create longer pieces than typical. The study suggests that educators combine connectivism pedagogies with a reflective writing approach (Al Maawali, 2022).

Lv et al. (2021) point out that writing assignments and examinations in a second or foreign language usually include online comments (SL or FL). Lv et al. (2021) add that meta-analysis determined online writing feedback's effectiveness in SL/FL. This study synthesizes the results of 17 main studies on the effectiveness of online feedback on students' English SL or FL writing. Lv et al. (2021) assert that The trials involved 1568 students, and the findings showed that written feedback is generally beneficial, with a Hedges' G effect size of 0.753. Compared to peer feedback (g = 0.777) and automated feedback (g = 0.696), online teacher input had a bigger effect size (g = 2.248). Lv et al. (2021) concede that task genre and educational level moderate online comments on writing quality. Lv et al. (2021) shed light on online ESL/EFL writing training and aid in a better understanding of the impact of online feedback on writing in these languages (Lv et al., 2021). In the teaching and grading of EFL/ESL writing, integrated writing is becoming more popular than the old impromptu writing-only method. A promising field of research has focused on the source text, which stands out as an aspect of integrated writing, and the goal is to enhance its value to raise student involvement. The consequences and suggestions for additional research are then presented. The ramifications and potential future research avenues are then examined.

Lv et al. (2021) assert that the study used 67 Iranian intermediate EFL students divided into three groups. Reading-to-write (ERW) students were given emotionally charged source texts along with challenging exercises based on Goleman's Emotional Intelligence framework; reading-to-write (RW) students developed essays based on the texts without regard to their emotional content, and a control group of writing-only (WO) students did not. Results showed that the ERW group outperformed the RW group on integrated writing tasks. The ERW group did better on the overall independent writing task than the RW and WO groups. Additionally, the research revealed that students in the ERW group developed their emotional intelligence more than those in the RW and WO groups. The study explains how the emotional content of the source text, when combined with emotionally charged activities, can significantly increase learners' engagement with the source text during reading-to-write assignments, leading to better writing. Discussion is had regarding the implications and suggestions for additional study (Lv et al., 2021).

For EFL students, writing is a crucial skill because it is a complicated process that combines many different elements. Writing assignments must be a part of any curriculum. Writing effectively depends on using proper grammar. Process writers regard free-writing diaries as an effective tool for teaching writing to EFL students. The influence of the free-writing journal on EFL students will be evaluated in this study. Eighty college writing students participated in this study. Thirty-five students were in the experimental group, whereas 45 were in the control group. The control group adhered to a predetermined writing programme with topics selected for them and writing that followed a clear framework, whereas the experimental group wrote in English freely without regard for faults on their chosen topics. The number of written words, spelling, capitalization, subject-verb agreement and punctuation were checked to gauge the kids' growth level. Ten students from the experimental group participated in an interview about their experiences with the free-writing programme. Students learnt more grammar in the free-writing programme than in the control group. After the study, the students

claimed that writing for pleasure improved their writing abilities (Alharthi, 2021).

Several digital solutions that offer computer-mediated remedial feedback have also emerged because computers now offer this service. For instance, Grammarly can identify duplicate content and grammatical, lexical, mechanics, and style issues. This tech review outlines its capabilities and suggests possible applications for them in writing for ESL and EFL. Grammarly has several issues that need to be fixed even though it is a valuable tool for teachers and students (Barrot, 2020)

Nazari et al. (2021) argue that engaging students with different emotional characteristics are a significant challenge in integrating educational technologies. How technology affects attitudes and learning is another gap. Nazari et al. (2021) investigated the effectiveness of an AI-powered writing tool for postgraduate English second-year students. Students were randomly allocated to either the 60-equipped AI or the 120 unequipped AI (NEAI). Nazari et al. (2021) state that after the intervention, students in the AI intervention group demonstrated statistically significant gains in their behaviour (Cohen's d =.75, 95 per cent confidence interval [0.38, 1.12]), emotions (Cohen's d =.82, 95 per cent confidence interval [0.45, 1.25]), cognition (Cohen's d =.39, 95 per cent confidence interval [0.04,.76]), and writing self-efficacy (Cohen's d =.39, 95 per cent confidence interval [0.04. Non-native postgraduate students writing academically in English could benefit from AI-powered writing tools using formative feedback and assessment (Nazari et al., 2021).

3. Research Methods

This paper used an experimental research method to collect data. Experiments are often used to test new pedagogy, curriculum, or learning materials. Therefore, generalization is constrained using experimental samples that do not fully represent populations, all participants' interests were considered while deciding on experimental control settings (Taber, 2019). Thus, five lecturers from the International Maritime College of Oman foundation department agreed to collect data for 10 teaching weeks for elementary, pre-intermediate, and intermediate levels. As a bridging stage between secondary school and higher education, the foundation department offers students intensive English language and math courses and an exit exam, allowing them to join degree programs at the college. The study focused on four central foundation students from Oman and other GCC countries. The lecturers recorded the common issues learners face in their writing skills and the solutions to overcome them for ten weeks during the fall semester of 2021-22. The form used to collect data was based on weeks, topics, students' levels, common issues and applied solutions. The study also used secondary data by searching Scopus data for common writing issues for higher education students. The study used Vosviwer to visualize the common issues in ESL writing worldwide by focusing on authorship relations and keyword occurrences.

4. Findings & Analysis

4.1 The focus on writing issues worldwide

VoSviwer findings based on Scopus research on co-authorship, complete counting per country with a minimum number of two documents, revealed 42 items divided into 8 main clusters representing 171 links out of a total link strength of 217 in figure 1. Figure 1 represents the global links worldwide dealing with the issues of writing in the English language. As a result, it shows the importance of this issue in English learning. The clusters are topped by the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, South Africa, Indonesia, Malaysia, and China. All researchers, however, are closely connected.
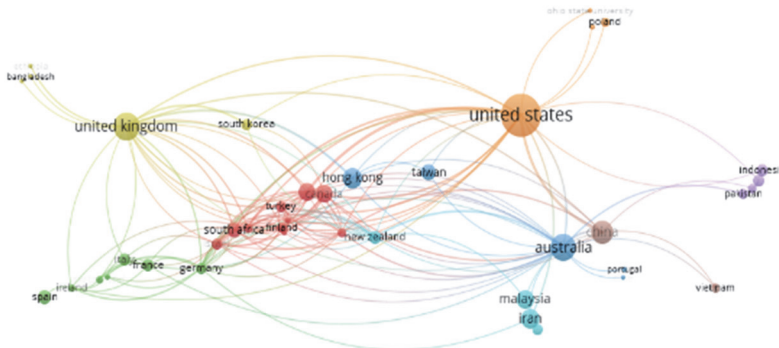
Figure 1: Co-authorship per country concerning writing issues in ESL (2005-2020) (VosViewer version 1.6.18).

Regarding the co-occurrence of authors' keywords, total counting revealed 42 keywords that meet the threshold with at least 5 out of 2111 keywords, as represented in figure 2. The figure reveals the importance of technology in teaching writing skills. For instance, all clusters are closely linked to those representing computer use, automation, information, and multimedia systems.
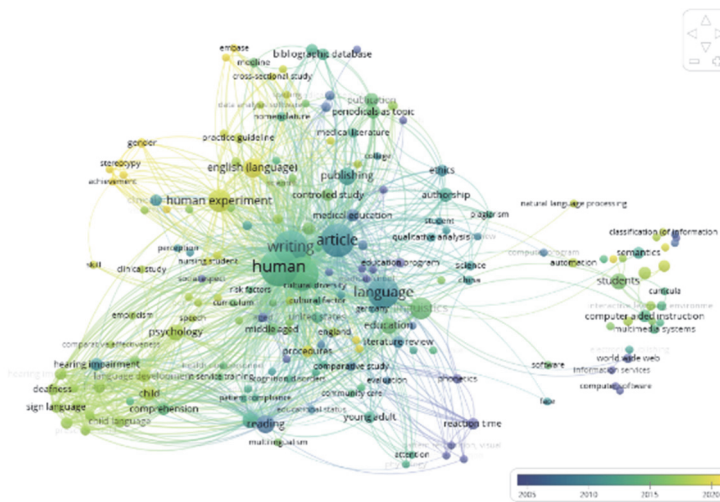
Figure 2: Co-occurrence of authors' keywords concerning writing issues in ESL (2005-2020) (VosViewer version 1.6.18)

4.2 Common writing issues and applied solutions at IMCO's foundation department

4.2.1 Summary of the common mistakes

Figure 3 summarises all the common mistakes committed by the foundation students at International Maritime College Oman. The mistakes are arranged from the most to the least committed. Therefore,

"sentence structure, spelling, thesis statements, plagiarism, punctuation, grammar inaccuracies, capitalization, contractions, disorganization, and sentence fragmentation" are the top 10 common mistakes. However, "wrong forms, word counts, word choice, and irrelevant ideas" come at the end of the list
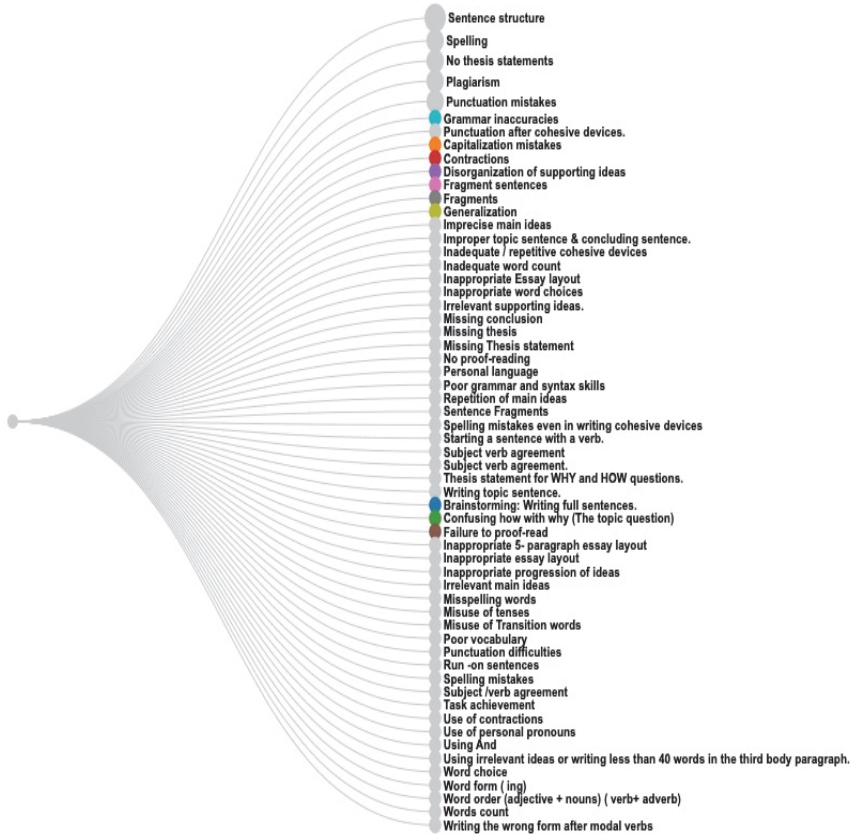
Figure 3: Summary of the common mistakes committed by foundation students at all levels (Yale DHL RawGaphs 2.0 beta 2022)

4.2.2 Summary of the applied solutions

Figure 4 represents the solutions applied by all lecturers who contributed to the research paper addressing common writing issues. The solutions are arranged from the most to the least used. It is evident that lecturers opted for "peer correction, self-correction, group correction, referring students to academic regulations, quizzes, projection, and scaffolding." These techniques reflect the student-centred approach applied at the college. Peer teaching, website use, and pair work are the least used approaches. These techniques are less used, which may be due to the online teaching conditions.
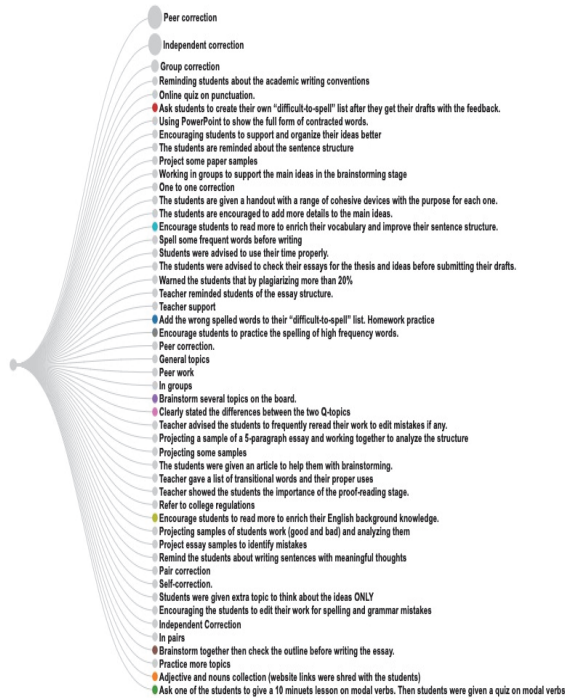
Figure 4: Summary of the applied solutions for all levels (Yale DHL RawGaphs 2.0 beta 2022)

4.2.3 Common mistakes committed by Elementary level students and solutions applied

Table 1 highlights the significant issues the elementary-level students faced over ten weeks. Findings reveal that the common issues are "subject-verb-agreement, sentence structure, topic sentence, concluding sentence, task achievement, spelling, irrelevant ideas, word form, and word order." Concerning the solutions provided by the lecturer for this group, "group correction, self-correction, peer-correction, practice, and spelling technique."

Table 1: Common writing issues and solutions applied to the elementary level

Week	Class Level	SS number	Topic	Common issues	Applied solutions
1 to 4	Elementary	30 students	Why should people eat healthy food?	Subject-verb agreement.	General topics
				Sentence structure.	Group correction
				Improper topic sentence & concluding sentence.	One-to-one correction
				Task achievement	Students were given extra topics to think about the ideas ONLY
4 to 7			Why should students learn English?	Sentence structure	Group correction
				Irrelevant supporting ideas.	Spell some frequent words before writing
				Spelling	Adjective and nouns collection (website links were shared with the students)
				Words count	
7 to 10			Why Should students use mobile phones?	Sentence structure	Pair correction
				Word form (Ing)	Practice more topics
				Word order (adjective + nouns) (verb+ adverb)	Adjective and nouns collection (website links were shared with the students)

4.2.4 Common mistakes committed by pre-intermediate level students and solutions applied

Table 2 shows the significant issues of the pre-intermediate level students over ten weeks. The group comprises 30 students aged between 18 and 19, with 19 males and 11 females. Findings reveal that the common issues are "spelling, subject-verb agreement, punctuation, run-on sentences, thesis statement writing, sentence structure, plagiarism, no proofreading, and grammatical issues." Concerning the solutions provided by the lecturer for this group, "self-correction, peer-correction, sample projection, teacher support, encouraging reading, spelling technique, and referring back to academic regulations."

Table 2: Common writing issues and solutions for pre-intermediate level

Week	Class Level	Number of SS	Common issues	Applied solutions
1	Pre-intermediate	30	Misspelling words	Independent correction
			Subject/verb agreement	Peer correction
			Punctuation mistakes	Essays Samples projection to identify and correct mistakes
2			Run-on sentences	Remind the students about writing sentences with meaningful thoughts
		Males	Spelling mistakes	Peer correction
			Capitalization mistakes	Independent correction
3		19	No thesis statements	The teacher reminded students of the essay structure.
			Subject-verb agreement	Independent correction
4			Poor grammar and syntax skills	Independent correction
		Females	Punctuation mistakes	Peer correction
				Samples projection
5		11	Failure to proofread	The teacher advised the students to reread their work to edit any mistakes frequently.
			Missing conclusion	Students were advised to use their time correctly.
		Age	Punctuation mistakes	Peer correction
6		17-18	Generalization	Independent correction
			Spelling mistakes	Write simple sentences at home as a kind of practice task.
			Word choice	Independent correction
7			Poor vocabulary	Encourage students to read more to enrich their English background knowledge.
			Inappropriate essay layout	Projecting some samples
			Misuse of tenses	Peer correction
			Plagiarism	Teacher support
8			Misuse of Transition words	The teacher gave a list of transitional words and their proper uses
			No thesis statements	The teacher showed the students the importance of the proofreading stage.
			No proofreading	Warned the students that by plagiarising more than 20%, they would be penalized.
			Plagiarism	Teacher support
9			Spelling mistakes	Independent correction
			Subject /verb agreement	Peer correction
			Fragments	Project some paper samples
10			Use of personal pronouns	Independent Correction
			Repetition of main ideas	Peer correction
			Punctuation mistakes	Project essay samples to identify mistakes

4.2.5 Common mistakes committed by intermediate-level students and solutions applied

Table 3 shows the significant issues the pre-intermediate level students face in Group 2 for ten weeks. The group comprises 30 people between 18 and 19, 15 males and 15 females. Findings reveal that the common issues are: "brainstorming, writing the topic sentence, spelling, subject-verb agreement, punctuation, run-on-sentences, thesis statement writing, sentence structure, contractions, conjunctions, modal verbs, verbal sentences instead of nominal ones, and grammatical issues." People in this group were given solutions by the lecturer: "group brainstorming," "constructive feedback" and "self-correction."

E-ISSN 2240-0524
ISSN 2239-978X

Journal of Educational and Social Research
www.richtmann.org

Vol 12 No 6
November 2022

Table 3: Common writing issues and solutions applied for pre-intermediate level

Week	Class Level	SS number	Topic	Common issues	Applied solutions
1	Pre-intermediate Students	30	How can people stay healthy?	Brainstorming: Writing entire sentences.	Brainstorm several topics on the board.
1		Males	(150-word paragraph)	Writing topic sentence.	In groups, students read different paragraphs. Then, they choose the best topic sentence for each paragraph (Multiple choice)
2		15	How can people stay healthy?	Thesis statement for WHY and HOW questions.	Students write thesis statements for different HOW and WHY questions in peer work.
2		Females		Spelling	After getting their drafts with the feedback, ask students to create their own" difficult-to-spell" list.
3		15	(250-word four-paragraph essay)	Subject-verb- agreement	Feedback session on subject- verb -agreement + practice.
3				Sentence structure	Group correction
3		Age:18-19	Why should students learn the English language?	Personal language, e.g. *I think.*	Peer correction
4				Contractions	Using PowerPoint to show the complete form of contracted words.
5			(250-word four-paragraph essay)	Using *And, But, and So* conjunctions at the beginning of a sentence.	In pairs, students find alternatives for some conjunctions.
6			How can students pass exams?	Using irrelevant ideas or writing less than 40 words in the third body paragraph.	Brainstorm together, then check the outline before writing the essay.
7				Writing the wrong form after modal verbs, e.g., Students must study.	Ask one of the students to give a 10-minute lesson on modal verbs. Then students were given a quiz on modal verbs.
8			(300-word five-paragraph essay)		
9			Why do students need technology?	Spelling	Add the wrong spelt words to their "difficult-to-spell" list.
9				Starting a sentence with a verb.	Peer correction.
10			(300-word five-paragraph essay)	Punctuation after cohesive devices.	Online quiz on punctuation.

4.2.6 Common mistakes committed by intermediate-level students and solutions applied

Table 4 shows the issues the intermediate-level students face over ten weeks. The group comprises 30 students aged between 18 and 20. Findings reveal that the common issues are "disorganization of main ideas, inappropriate essay layout, inappropriate conclusions, irrelevant ideas, inadequate words, writing a topic sentence, spelling, punctuation, run-on sentences, sentence structure, and grammatical issues." Concerning the solutions provided by the lecturer of this group "video display, group work, essay samples provided, a range of supporting materials such as transition words, constructive feedback, self-correction, peer-correction, and samples' projection."

Table 4: Common writing issues and solutions applied for intermediate level

Week	Class Level	SS number	Common issues	Applied solutions
1	Intermediate	30	The organization of supporting ideas	Encouraging students to support and organize their ideas better
			Fragment sentences	Remind the students about writing sentences with meaningful thoughts
2			Inappropriate Essay layout	A sample of a 4-paragraph essay was given. Students went through the sample and analyzed the structure.
			Missing Thesis statement	
			Inappropriate conclusion	
3			Irrelevant supporting sentences	Using video on the same topic so that students can get some relevant ideas
			Imprecise main ideas	Working in groups to support the main ideas in the brainstorming stage
4			Inadequate word count	The students are encouraged to add more details to the main ideas.
			Fragment sentences	The students are reminded about the sentence structure
			Inadequate/repetitive cohesive devices	A range of cohesive devices with the purpose for each one is given to students to scaffold them.
5			Irrelevant main ideas	The students were given an article to help them with brainstorming.
			Missing thesis	The students were advised to check their essays for the thesis and ideas before submitting their drafts.
			Inappropriate progression of ideas	

Week	Class Level	SS number	Common issues	Applied solutions
6			Inappropriate word choices	Encourage students to read more to enrich their vocabulary and improve their sentence structure.
			Spelling mistakes even in writing cohesive devices	Encourage students to practice the spelling of high-frequency words.
			Sentence Fragments	
7			Punctuation difficulties	Projecting samples of students' work (good and bad) and analyzing them, making corrections where needed.
			Spelling mistakes	
			Inappropriate body paragraph layout	
8			Inappropriate 5- paragraph essay layout	Projecting a sample of a 5-paragraph essay and working together to analyze the structure
			Confusing how with why (The topic question)	Clearly stated the differences between the two Q-topics
9			Spelling mistakes	Encouraging the students to edit their work for spelling and grammar mistakes
			Sentence structure	Reminding students about the academic writing conventions
			Register	
10			Use of contractions	Encouraging the students to edit their work for spelling and grammar mistakes
			Grammar inaccuracies	Reminding students about the academic writing conventions

5. Conclusions

This paper is an experimental study highlighting the common issues faced by the foundation students at International Maritime College Oman. The paper is an attempt to reflect on the collaborative work done by the English foundation lecturers to raise the level of the students in this transition stage. The study has revealed the main issues students face at the college and the applied solutions to overcome this weakness. Findings reveal a student-centred approach to dealing with learners as learning is based on self-correction, peer correction, group work, scaffolding, and constructive feedback. However, it seems that the teaching approach lacks the use of artificial intelligence, different learning styles in teaching writing and in enabling learners to have more chances to overcome issues that are mainly due to the influence of language 1, the lack of reading, and self-motivation based on brainstorm among all the foundation lectures regarding how to boost the level of students.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that the lecturers integrate more technology in teaching writing and rely on artificial intelligence to address writing issues rather than focusing on traditional teaching methods as we deal with a new generation born in a technological environment. However, academic staff and management should also develop rules and means to ensure academic integrity, as technology is a twofold sword (Hu & Zhang, 2021). Moreover, it is recommended to conduct more experimental research to study the case in-depth and develop clear solutions. It is also recommended to adopt more collaborative teaching to enhance learning. Similarly, it is recommended that writing be taught implicitly as part of the other skills, mainly reading and speaking, so as not to make male learners feel bored. Implementing games, interactive tools, and apps would engage learners and provide timely, efficient feedback.

References

Al Maawali, W. S. (2022). Experiential writing through connectivism learning theory: a case study of English language students in oman higher education. *Reflective Practice*, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623 943.2021.2021167

Alharthi, S. (2021). From Instructed Writing to Free-Writing: A Study of EFL Learners: *Https://Doi.Org/10.1177/21582440211007112*, *11*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211007112

Barrot, J. S. (2020). Integrating Technology into ESL/EFL Writing through Grammarly: *Https://Doi.Org/10.1177/0033688220966632*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688220966632

Chang, Y. B. (2021). Investigating L2 teacher-student writing conferences in a college ESL composition classroom. *English Teaching(South Korea)*, *76*(2), 25–55. https://doi.org/10.15858/ENGTEA.76.2.202106.25

He, L., & Shi, L. (2012). Topical knowledge and ESL writing: *Http://Dx.Doi.Org/10.1177/0265532212436659*, *29*(3), 443–464. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532212436659

Hilma, A., Fuad, A., & Asri Siti, F. (2021). *ERIC - EJ1288339 - Teaching Writing to Junior High School Students: A Focus on Challenges and Solutions, Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 2021.* https://eric.ed.gov/?q=writing+issues+in+english+langugae&pr=on&ft=on&id=EJ1288339

Hosseinpur, R. M., & Kazemi, Z. (2022). Composing strategies employed by high-and low-performing Iranian EFL students in essay writing classes. *Assessing Writing*, *51*, 100601. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ASW.2021.100601

Hu, J., & Zhang, C. (2021). ESL Student Perspectives on Problems and Solutions for Academic Integrity. *Canadian Perspectives on Academic Integrity*, *4*(2), 36–37. https://doi.org/10.11575/CPAI.V4I2.74168

Jitpraneechai, N. (2019). Noun Phrase Complexity in Academic Writing: A Comparison of Argumentative English Essays Written by Thai and Native English University Students. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, *12*(1), 71–88.

Kessler, M., Ma, W., & Solheim, I. (2021). The Effects of Topic Familiarity on Text Quality, Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency: A Conceptual Replication. *TESOL Quarterly*. https://doi.org/10.1002/TESQ.3096

Lee, S., Lim, G. S., & Basse, R. (2021). The Effect of Additional Time on the Quality of Argumentation in L2 Writing Assessment: A Mixed-methods Study. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, *18*(3), 253–272. https://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2021.1872080

Lv, X., Ren, W., & Xie, Y. (2021). The Effects of Online Feedback on ESL/EFL Writing: A Meta-Analysis. *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, *30*(6), 643–653. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-021-00594-6

Nazari, N., Shabbir, M. S., & Setiawan, R. (2021). Application of Artificial Intelligence-powered digital writing assistant in higher education: a randomized controlled trial. *Heliyon*, *7*(5), e07014. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.HELIYON.2021.E07014

Niemelä, H., & Naukkarinen, J. (2021). On the rocky road to academia: Stumbling blocks for Finnish engineering students with English as a second language. *International Journal of Engineering Pedagogy*, *10*(6), 36–56. https://doi.org/10.3991/IJEP.V10I6.14559

Rizkiani, S. (2021). *ERIC - EJ1305787 - Professional Competency of Pre-Service English Teachers and ICT during COVID-19 Pandemic, Acuity: Journal of English Language Pedagogy, Literature and Culture, 2021. 6*(2). https://eric.ed.gov/?q=enhanced+english+writing+during+COVID19&pr=on&ft=on&id=EJ1305787

Sarte, K. M., & Gnevsheva, K. (2022). Noun phrasal complexity in ESL written essays under a constructed-response task: Examining proficiency and topic effects. *Assessing Writing*, *51*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2021.100595

Taber, K. S. (2019). Experimental research into teaching innovations: responding to methodological and ethical challenges. *Https://Doi.Org/10.1080/03057267.2019.1658058*, *55*(1), 69–119. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057267.2019.1658058

Yu, C. (2020). *ERIC - EJ1239125 - The Washback of the New Writing Tasks in China's National Matriculation English Test, English Language Teaching, 2020. 13*(1). https://eric.ed.gov/?q=writing+issues+in+english+langugae&pr=on&ft=on&id=EJ1239125

Zamborova, K., & Klimova, B. (2021). Analyzing Second Language Written Summaries at University Level. *Emerging Science Journal*, *5*(6), 943–952. https://doi.org/10.28991/esj-2021-01322

Zaytseva, V., Miralpeix, I., & Pérez-Vidal, C. (2022). ESL Written development at home and abroad: taking a closer look at vocabulary. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *25*(1), 210–225. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2019.1664392