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EVALUATION

OF STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUACIÓN DE LAS HABILIDADES ESCRITURAS DE LOS ESTUDIANTES EN LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, finding efficient methods to assess university students' writing abilities has received significant attention. It has been pointed out that existing English writing exercises are largely ineffective for incoming university students, and students struggle with free writing tasks. This way, developing strong writing skills in English poses many challenges for students so, it is necessary to look for efficient ways to improve students' knowledge, sentence structure, and content when writing. In this regard, a key goal is emphasizing the importance of assessment for successfully teaching English writing. Considering the above, this study examines concepts for assessing university students' English writing skills. To accomplish this goal, the main methods of research used were a literature review and a survey among students at Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University. The study highlights how writing proficiency benefits students' cognitive growth and considers the psychological impacts of writing assessments. Findings indicate that assessments may increase anxiety and lower performance for college students' writing. As a result, evaluating students' written work poses difficulties for educators. Moreover, the writing process and features of effective writing differ in research versus assessment contexts. Key findings in the survey conducted show that instructions described for assessing writing offer students' systematic knowledge for effectively developing their writing abilities.

Keywords: Assessment principles, writing process, product writing, evaluation criteria.

RESUMEN

En los últimos años, se ha prestado mucha atención a la búsqueda de métodos eficientes para evaluar las habilidades de escritura de los estudiantes universitarios. Se ha señalado que los ejercicios de escritura en inglés existentes son en gran medida ineficaces para los estudiantes universitarios entrantes, y los estudiantes tienen dificultades con las tareas de escritura libre. De esta manera, desarrollar sólidas habilidades de escritura en inglés plantea muchos desafíos para los estudiantes, por lo que es necesario buscar formas eficientes de mejorar el conocimiento, la estructura de las oraciones y el contenido de los estudiantes al escribir. En este sentido, un objetivo clave es enfatizar la importancia de la evaluación para enseñar con éxito la escritura en inglés. Considerando lo anterior, este estudio examina conceptos para evaluar las habilidades de escritura en inglés de los estudiantes universitarios. Para lograr este objetivo, los principales métodos de investigación utilizados fueron una revisión de la literatura y una encuesta entre estudiantes de la Universidad Pedagógica Estatal de Azerbaiyán. El estudio destaca cómo el dominio de la escritura beneficia el crecimiento cognitivo de los estudiantes y considera los impactos psicológicos de las evaluaciones de escritura. Los hallazgos indican que las evaluaciones pueden aumentar la ansiedad y reducir el rendimiento de la escritura de los estudiantes universitarios. Como resultado, evaluar el trabajo escrito de los estudiantes plantea dificultades para los educadores. Además, el proceso de escritura y las características de una escritura efectiva difieren en contextos de investigación versus evaluación. Los hallazgos clave de la encuesta realizada muestran que las instrucciones descritas para evaluar la escritura ofrecen a los estudiantes conocimientos sistemáticos para desarrollar eficazmente sus habilidades de escritura.

Palabras clave: Principios de evaluación, proceso de redacción, redacción de productos, criterios de evaluación.

INTRODUCTION

English writing proficiency is an essential for obtaining professional and academic requirements. Several authors like O'Neill and Adler-Kassner (2010), Afrin (2016) and Fulcher (2012) state that writing in English today is seen as having a global impact on the community enabling students to communicate via various writing tools, along with memos, emails, websites, etc. Therefore, the evaluation of writing in the English language is based on a fully multidisciplinary theory and different educational contexts should be explored to obtain relevant results. The recent theories of English writing show that they have few judgments about evaluation with explicit reasoning. Therefore, there is a great need for writing assessments to improve learners' writing practices in English language teaching contexts.

Peha (2011, p. 23) stated that assessment is called a process that a teacher collects all information on learners' progress. As a term, assessment is received as a concept to ensure accountability in learning. Therefore, the assessment focuses on what students know, what they are intended to know, and what results they achieved. Writing assessment aims at improving student linguistic, communication, and discourse skills, as well as cognitive and critical thinking skills. Assessment is the best stage that is screening the dynamic growth of writing skills between the input and output stages. Nevertheless, teachers occasionally evaluate the writing skills of English language learners through grammar and content tasks. They find it difficult to differentiate between evaluation and assessment, appropriate measurement instruction for assessing writing skills. To help students improve their writing, they prefer to assign just a few tasks on a given assignment. Writing proficiency in the English language is typically not fully attained in general education. As a result, they run into a lot of problems when trying to show off their writing skills. All of these challenges prevent them from ultimately delivering a well-written product. Hyland (2013), Brown and Abeywickrama (2004) and Neff-Lippman (2011) all state that it can be difficult for teachers to evaluate the writing skills of their students. Despite what experts may say, assessing a student's writing skills can be challenging for language teachers.

Therefore, to make appropriate assessments and to make corrections, several difficulties have to be sorted. For example, Wang and Bakken (2004) conducted a qualitative evaluation approach to examine the gap between

the current and desired proficiency level for the academic writing of English as a second language (ESL) in clinical investigators. The study found that clinical investigators do not accurately perceive their writing deficiencies, have little knowledge of criteria for academic writing, and are influenced by their prior English learning experiences in their home culture, which engenders passive attitudes toward seeking appropriate writing resources. Because of that, adequate time is especially needed to develop successful writing skills. On the other hand, students with disabilities may experience difficulties in learning English as a foreign language, particularly in writing, due to challenges in phonological awareness and working memory, which are crucial to second language learning (Fazio et al., 2021). In addition, students may also face difficulties in writing, and their learning of writing skills depending on the teachers' approaches to teaching these skills, which highlight the need of a good preparation of the educators (Suharyat & Lusiana, 2023).

It shouldn't be forgotten that writing in a second language involves a complex interplay of cognitive faculties, idea generation, relevant knowledge application, and vocabulary proficiency. This highlights the intricate nature of linguistic expression, extending beyond mere language skills. Writing, in this context, requires a reflective engagement that integrates cognitive, conceptual, and linguistic dimensions. This understanding has implications not only for academic writing but also for teaching methods, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to language proficiency that encompasses both surface-level linguistic skills and the deeper cognitive and creative aspects inherent in expressing oneself in a non-native language (Kim et al., 2021).

Considering what has been said, the main objective of this investigation is to emphasize the importance of assessment in successfully teaching English writing. To accomplish this objective, in the article it is defined the basic concepts of evaluation, its types, and new approaches to the writing activity, and examines the diversity of written assessment methods. The ultimate goal is to minimize the gap between theory and practice and contribute to teachers with effective instruction for assessing students' writing skills in teaching English (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2004; Cohen et al., 1977).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In recent years, effective assessment methods for students' writing skills in higher education have attracted great attention. Moreover, the major concern with writing is how to assess it or find an appropriate method for evaluating it to ensure quality writing. Therefore, this paper takes various approaches to score students' writing skills. In addition, considering the psychological effects of writing activity, in the paper it is discussed the benefit of writing skills to the cognitive development of learners. In this sense, writing is an important skill for language acquisition, as well as for developing self-confidence and relieving stress.

To conduct the research, we used as mainly the literature review and survey method. A literature review is a critical analysis of the existing body of literature on a particular topic. It involves identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant information and research findings from various sources, such as books, journals, and other scholarly articles. A literature review is important because it provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge on a topic, helps identify gaps in the existing literature, and informs the development of new research questions and hypotheses. It also helps researchers avoid duplicating work that has already been done and provides a foundation for their own research (Anwar & Ahmed, 2016; Wang & Bakken, 2004). By synthesizing and analyzing the existing literature on this topic, researchers can gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by students learning writing skills in a second language and develop effective strategies to address these challenges.

On the other hand, a survey is a research method that involves collecting data from a sample of individuals or organizations, typically using structured questionnaires or interviews. Surveys are important because they provide valuable insights into various phenomena. They can help businesses, governments, and researchers understand the needs and preferences of their target audience, identify trends, and make informed decisions based on the data collected. The objective of the survey conducted in this research was to assess the writing skills of students at the Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University. Therefore, participants were selected from the English language departments at the university. Data collected from the participants included 34 female and 24 male student participants, four language tutors, and two more focus group members. Various methods were used to gather information from respondents about the use of assessment criteria

in writing. Interviews were conducted in two stages, with separate ones for each group of students. The main focus was on how writing skills are assessed during interval exams for the study's qualitative analyses, surveys, questionnaires, structured interviews, and semi-structured interviews were prepared to produce reliable results.

RESULTS-DISCUSSION

On the principles to evaluate writing skills in English language teaching

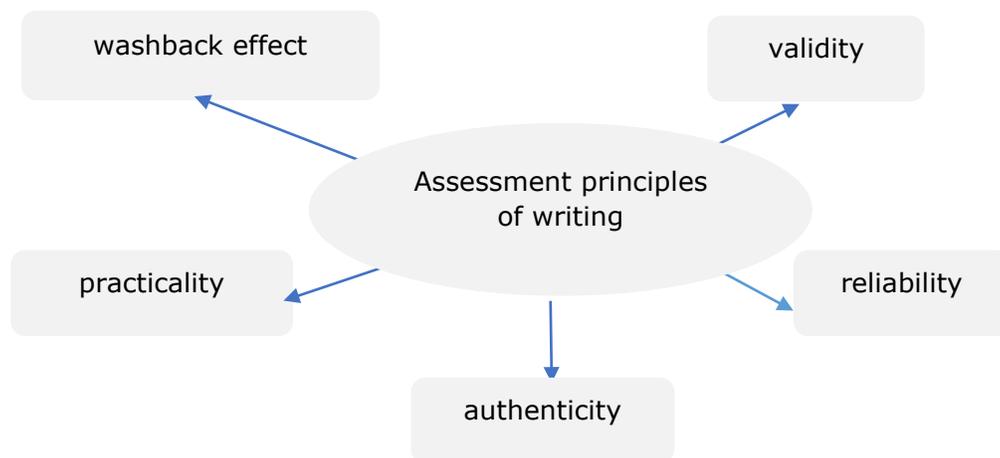
Writing, according to Badger and White (2000, p. 153) and Cheung (2016), is a multiplex activity and this activity should be conducted in the classroom since secondary school. Instructions about writing exercises and evaluating students' writing skills with some criteria should be given in the curriculum. Writing activities in English language teaching are understood as developing writing products, but there is a great need to improve the writing process for undergraduate students. It is one of the crucial requirements for students to have academic writing skills in university. As writing skills become more important, drawing correctly and fluently becomes more crucial. O'Neill and Adler-Kassner (2010), Asep (2014), Carless (2009) and Nyang'au (2014) emphasized that it indicates students' communication, critical thinking, and demonstrating academic knowledge in the practice. However, that the primary component of the assessment is based on evaluating students' communication, genre, and linguistic skills and research knowledge in the writing process.

Swales and Feak (1994) and Noel (2017) noted that at the university level, students should reflect all components of writing in their written work, as it is considered one of the most academic skills among other subjects. Moreover, it has a fantastic impact on the psychological and emotional capabilities of students. Writing has a significant effect on the language and critical thinking abilities of students. For this purpose, evaluating students' writing skills is a crucial part of learning process. Assessment boosts an effective relationship between learning and assessment. While learning, it is available to ensure students' weaknesses and strengths in the writing process.

In higher education, writing proficiency is assessed based on specific principles (Figure 1). There are several reasons to work on improving one's writing abilities. The most crucial ideas are to support students' language learning, and grades, place them in courses appropriate for their level, let them transfer to new classes, validate skills,

and evaluate programs. According to McCracken et al., (2012), the implementation of this process will be successful if the writing evaluation principles are taken into consideration. When evaluating writing, it's crucial to keep in mind the guiding assessment principles of validity, reliability, authenticity, and practicality.

Fig 1: Assessment principles of writing.



Source: Own elaboration.

Fareed et al., (2016) and Williams (2014) proposed that the principle of validity is considered an assessment method that measures students' writing assignments. This principle essentially means that a test or any assessment method determines what to teach and what to test. It is believed that instructors have to teach the writing process thoroughly to make their assessment work valid. Validity can be achieved in assessing writing developing direct or indirect abilities in English as a foreign language. Brown and Abeywickrama (2004) and Fulcher (2012) stated that indirect assessment requires learners to do some writing-related activity, answering questions about grammar, punctuation, and capitalization in multiple-choice tests. In contrast, direct assessment focuses on students' involvement in the intended writing task, such as producing a short story, essay, article, or job-related writing.

In assessing writing, reliability is an important principle to consider when implementing high-stakes tests, whether students are placed or pass the exam. Reliability is frequently mentioned by Cohen et al., (1977), who divides the three components of assessment into testing and rating, contextual factors related to testing administration, and student factors that contribute to objectivity. Williams (2014) argued that using scales that do not explicitly state the evaluation criteria requires reliability. Then, based on various writing components, evaluators render inconsistent judgments of students' writing. These scales, which are labeled "excellent," "satisfied," and "poor," are created with clear criteria that provide a subjective assessment of writing ability and inform students of their writing.

Brown and Abeywickrama (2004) and Cohen et al., (1977) highlighted that the specificity of the authenticity principle added to the evaluation of language sets it apart from other principles. This principle focuses on how students' written representations of the target language are evaluated during testing. If the writing assessments given to students are genuine, they will result in interactions with real-world facts that will help students develop their genre writing and communication abilities. Examples include cover letters, motivation letters, reference letters, complaint letters, and creating booklets, leaflets, or brochures. Developing and accessing writing requires the teachers' use of authentic tasks, real-life experiences, and design rubrics on these skills (Swales & Feak, 1994, p. 77). Therefore, the language testing specialists argued that performance assessment of writing in ESL contexts maintains authentic tasks by using criteria and some rubrics.

The application of the writing process is related to the principle of practicality. O'Neill and Adler-Kassner (2010) asserts that practicality in writing assessment is appropriate given the practical considerations for test administration and execution. For the administration to assess the assessment's viability, resources must be available. Cheung (2016, p. 14) suggested the resources that are used to put practicality into practice. They list three different types of resources:

writing time, tangible resources like rooms and workspaces, technology, resources like equipment, writing supplies, test creators, administrators, and scoring items, as well as human resources like these. The following step, washback effect, known as feedback, is necessary for writing assessments to be successful. However, it usually takes a lot of time and requires labor. In this instance, teachers use self-and peer assessment to implement practicality in quick assessment writing.

Components of assessing writing skills

The text-writing process develops original solutions to problems and is regarded as the most difficult task. The study presents the five crucial components of assessing writing in the given ways: aligning assessment of writing in the curriculum and learning outcomes; providing assignments for genuine writing intention; creating productive writing assignments; analyzing psychological effects of writing; creating assessment criteria for writing skills and providing constructive feedback for improvements (Afrin, 2016; Carless, 2009; Hyland, 2013).

First, students will succeed in writing without any problems if the curriculum and learning objectives regarding developing both types of writing products and the writing process. Then, the main point is that learners have difficulty explaining the difference between the written product and the writing process. These types of writing should be designed in the learning outcomes. Students should understand all stages of the writing process, such as pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing skills to produce productive written work. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to give teachers a piece of detailed information on the writing process.

According to Weigle (1994) and Nyang'au (2014) the arguments for developing students' writing skills should be based on students' intentions. They feel confident, speak with a language and expressions that are appropriate for the situation, and exhibit flexible thought processes because they are self-assured and speak with confidence. As a result, the students intended to write messages, job-related papers, essays and reports. The contexts that are poetic, social, and cultural. poetic, social, and cultural contexts make them to face several challenges. Since handwriting is still used in the context of ESL that is required in the writing process, tutors and students have the chance to employ a variety of assessment strategies in all stages of writing described above. In the broader context of language learning and assessment, handwriting is frequently used (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2004).

It is clear that, as a productive skill, writing requires a high level of accuracy. Badger and White (2000) and

Salmani-Nodoushan (2007) show that the assessment of writing depends on the type of writing activity and performance. It is known that the assessment of writing gives learners several skills to construct a meaningful text or a kind of message according to the types of writing extensive writing, job-related writing, and personal writing.

Up to now, the majority of teachers claim that writing is the most difficult language skill, comparing it to other language skills (Hyland, 2013, p. 98). Therefore, writing is the most difficult language skill to teach, and even to assess different writing assignments. As a kind of an irony, writing evaluations help students improve their writing abilities through writing assignments and have a significant impact on the development of different teaching strategies in the context of educational programs and the learning process (Peha, 2011). It has been demonstrated by Fulcher (2012) and Salmani-Nodoushan (2007) that writing assessment aids students in developing a systematic and coherent understanding of writing. It stands out because it illustrates how written work should be structured. When introducing new ideas in a document, they should use the appropriate grammar, capitalization, and punctuation.

Recent studies have demonstrated that writing by students can increase their self-awareness, which in turn reduces depressive symptoms, anxious thoughts, and perceived stress. Reflective writing aims to provide individuals with a method of explicitly evaluating their beliefs and actions for learning and development. When writing creatively, learners are encouraged to use words, metaphors, and images that truly capture the message they want to get across.

Finally, teachers should remember that giving feedback to a student who has performed poorly on a task develops a student's writing performance. Feedback is understood in both conceptions: evaluation and correction are the two primary components. McCracken et al., (2012, p. 110) claimed that teachers give feedback to the learners on how well or poorly they did on the assessment. Through explanation, the offering of superior or different options, or through elicitation, the learner is corrected by providing specific information on certain aspects of their performance.

Criteria in evaluating and developing writing skills

Teachers keep in mind that scoring writing items is very deeply analytical work. It is clear that there are a lot of controversies among teachers and students on scoring writing assignments. Traditionally a student's writing performance is evaluated by a norm-referenced approach. This approach involved only content, punctuation, and grammar structure items in scoring. Recently, however,

shifting the norm-referenced method to the criterion-based method opened new approaches to assessing writing.

The criterion-referenced approach has specific features of judgment to realize the quality of scoring writing. The quality of written work is seen as meeting to external criteria such as coherence, grammatical accuracy, contextual appropriateness, and so on. According to Hyland (2013, p. 112), a criterion-based approach entails three categories, holistic, analytic, and trait-based. Students' writing is developed in large part by assessment criteria and standards in writing. In order to improve students' understanding of their writing performance, assessment criteria should be clearly defined. On the one hand, teachers must select some criteria for students' behavior in presenting a written product. On the other hand, teachers should define a well-designed scoring system to evaluate students' written product objectively. Badger and White (2000) and Salmani-Nodoushan (2007) stated that in developing performance criteria, teachers attribute in the evaluation of writing might be mechanics, defining students' correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. For the next step, teachers must choose several performance dimensions, well-organized paragraphs, and good transitions for clear cohesion, accuracy, clarity, vocabulary, and engaging content. By selecting assessment metrics, teachers should determine how they will provide feedback on writing beforehand.

According to Fareed et al., (2016, p. 86) assessing writing and giving a score is a very sensitive task for teachers. Traditionally teachers preferred judging students' written work in order to mark linguistic errors. It was a norm-referenced approach and made students less motivated to the next step of writing. However, the norm-referenced approach has been applied widely at the university recently, but the criterion-referenced method is preferred for assessing written work effectively. According to the criterion-referenced method to assess writing, students' written work is judged for making grammar mistakes, coherence, contextual appropriateness, and paragraph setting. Hence, the analysis of assessing writing indicates how students understand the steps of the writing process on given tasks. Badger and White (2000) presented the following criteria between the writing process and writing products. Hyland (2013) and Weigle (1994) presented three types of approaches for assessing writing:

1. The holistic assessment conducts students' overall impressions quickly
2. The analytic assessment is given on different scales on components written separately.

3. The trait-based assessment refers to tasks based on linguistic, communicative, and critical thinking skills.

The writing assignment is provided in the textbook, and students are expected to complete it following the given guidelines. However, some students may struggle with the task of writing short paragraphs on certain topics, especially when it comes to free writing. In this case, the teacher assesses writing tasks holistically by evaluating the student's understanding of the task, compliance with the given conditions, and the correctness of the final written product.

In order to develop effective writing skills, the writing process is applied based on specific criteria (Table 1). It is evident from the criteria listed in the table that the writing process is applied in accordance with specific standards. Establishing and providing students with analytical criteria ahead of time is crucial when it comes to free writing. It is important to assess various aspects of the written text such as word count, paragraph structure, effective support of the topic, appropriate usage of conjunctions and connecting clauses, reduction of repetitions, grammatical consistency, vocabulary use, and the use of appropriate lexical units. By doing so, we can ensure that the written text meets the required standards and is of high quality.

Table 1: Assessing writing skills.

Writing process criteria	Writing products criteria
Task Response	Purpose
Cohesion	Set Goals
Grammar	Review
Lexical Recourses	Refine

Source: Cohen et al. (1977)

When evaluation criteria and their explanations are given to students, free writing should be evaluated comprehensively as the following:

- Word count for the size of paragraphs.
- Organization - in what form the idea in the writing is developed.
- Rhetorical structure - to what extent the level of clarity and completeness of the text has been achieved.
- Content – how well the content is covered in the writing.
- Meaning accuracy – do the words or ideas used brought to their logical conclusion?
- Spelling rules - to what extent the rules of the correct spelling of words have been followed.

- Punctuation marks - to what extent punctuation marks are used locally in the writing.
- Handwriting - how neat and beautiful the written work is written.
- Style - to what extent the rules of having a certain level of formality in the writing work have been followed in writing.

Challenges in the assessment of writing

First, a lack of vocabulary skills may cause that when constructing sentence fluency and meaningful text using different words and useful phrases (Asep, 2014). In many cases, students use spoken words that should be avoided in the writing process. Therefore, good vocabulary skills help students deliver. Secondly, they have linguistic skills in product writing, but not applying the writing process. In more English language classes, students get satisfied with their writing in doing linguistic tasks, as well as filling in gaps, completing the sentences, opening the brackets, and using some words in a required form. The main difficulties are a lack of knowledge about the purpose of writing, coherent expression of the text, punctuation, use of transitional words, and other writing strategies. Afrin (2016, p. 110) argued that the main challenges are observed in constructing paragraphs and choosing topic sentences for a paragraph to make fluent coherence. In the end, they get into trouble when they read back and see a lot of errors.

Nowadays students have the perception that they want to feel free to express their ideas whatever they please. The writing process should be organized in a warm learning environment by the teachers so that students get motivated to feel free or feel their partners' support in writing. Another challenge faced by teachers in assessing students' writing skills is, as Asep (2014) and Afrin (2016) noted, the lack of knowledge of teachers about the phasing and strategies of the writing process, as well as **pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing**. Teachers should apply the writing process based on practicing product strategies. The differences between these types of strategies help teachers assess students' writing by developing cognitive and metacognitive skills.

Firstly, the students need to improve grammar, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, and sentence structure in order to write coherently. Secondly, they have a lack of interest in writing because it takes more time, so they need to apply the required steps gradually to produce effective writing. Thus, according to these steps, teachers can create appropriate assessment checklists or rubrics for their writing skills. This kind of gradual teaching of writing makes it possible to evaluate more quickly in higher

education. Finally, sometimes teachers have a lack of giving feedback or correcting students' written work. Before checking students' progress teachers should identify their specific problems. However, teachers do not enjoy checking or correcting students' written work, because it is a time-consuming activity. Furthermore, teachers can't use different strategies and approaches to assess their written work. They need to identify students' different levels of writing that result in various difficulties. Hence, teachers should conduct appropriate writing activities to assess students objectively.

Results about the survey

Based on the discussion of the obtained results, first and second year students were asked about their interest in writing and how often they participate in writing activities per week. Through our analysis, we discovered that freshmen and sophomore students had varying levels of interest in writing and differed in their frequency of participation in these activities. To gain further insight, we inquired about which writing assignments piqued their interest. By understanding what motivates students to write, we can better tailor our teaching methods to promote their success. In addition, initial thoughts on evaluation among teachers, tutors, and target group members were obtained, along with information on exam indicators. Most teachers emphasized their weak performance in meeting the requirements of writing activities. It was noted that evaluation assignments carried out during the daily class time were conducted in an ambiguous manner. Although instructions were given on step-by-step stages in the writing process, the teachers were less informed about the methodology of applying this activity. Considering the observed conflicts, a short training was provided to the teachers, and the methodology of applying the writing process was explained.

The first survey question was about the participation of male and female students from the 1st and 2nd years in writing activities during the semester (Table 2). The survey results showed that students were not very enthusiastic about participating in writing activities in English language teaching. It was suggested to perform written assignments orally. According to the survey, 8 out of 34 boys wrote very rarely, 12 occasionally, 9 somewhat, and 5 very often time. The fact that free writing exercises are completed once or twice a month helped to explain this. The writing assignment was described as verbally completing the writing assignments in the textbook because the previous instruction for this task was inadequate. It turned out that the students had no idea how to get better at writing because there were no evaluation criteria for the writing assignments. The second survey then looked into

the types of writing assignments they were interested in. This included the fact that there were no grading instructions and that the majority of the writing assignments in the textbooks followed the same format.

Table 2: Survey results on engaging writing activity

Question 1: How frequently do you write while studying English?					
Nº	Respondents	Seldom	Occasionally	Some what	Very often
1	Boys	8	12	9	5
2	Girls	5	9	6	4
3	Total	13	21	15	9

Source: Own elaboration

Table 3 shows students' attitudes to writing evaluation criteria. The results make it evident that most students' responses are predicated on assessing written assignments using the frequently stated criteria. The majority of the assignments were completed in accordance with the same instructions, which resulted in the students' opinions being similar and their lack of ability to think critically. It was observed that respondents' average percentages for vocabulary tasks were 85%, syntactic tasks were 80%, morphological tasks were 70%, correct spelling was 75%, grammar tests were 85%, and agreement of parts of speech was 82%.

Table 3: Survey results on students' attitude to writing evaluation criteria.

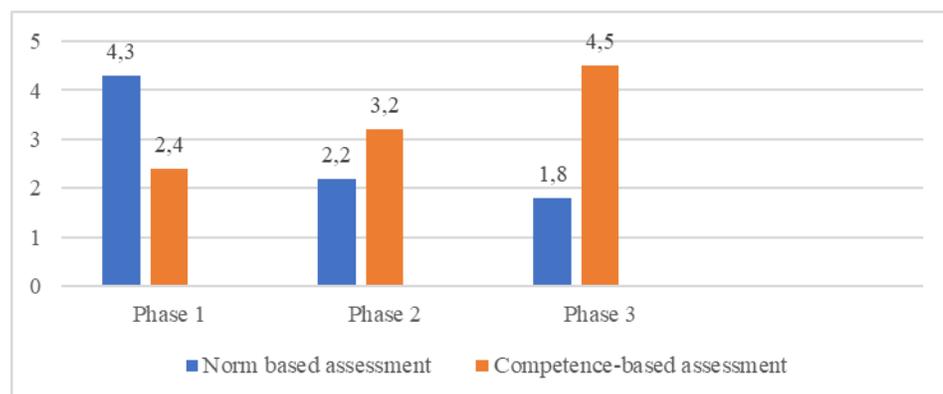
№	Criteria of written tasks	Respondents		
		Boys	Girls	Medium score
1	Vocabulary	26	18	0,85
2	Syntax	22	17	0,8
3	Morphology	20	15	0,7
4	Spelling	24	16	0,75
5	Grammar	27	19	0,85
6	Matching	25	21	0,82

Source: Own elaboration

During the experiment, students were given proper instructions to form their opinions about the academic writing process. They were provided with free writing prompts and sample compositions to help them understand the step-by-step writing mechanism. The evaluation criteria for each phase of the writing process were described in detail, along with the methodology for implementing them on the subjects. After going through multiple learning phases, the majority of applicants were able to submit free essays after they had a firm understanding of the writing process. Ultimately, competency-based evaluation—as opposed to norm-based assessment—was used to assess the students' writing assignments. When the evaluation criteria for writing were made clear, it turned out that the requirements were not as onerous as they seemed. This can be seen in the results of Figure 2.

The figure below depicts the growth of writing assessment at different stages. Initially, the requirements for writing abilities were based on conventional or norm-based criteria. However, in subsequent phases, competency-based criteria became more prevalent. In the first phase, task-based evaluations (norm-based - 4.3%; competency-based - 2.4%) were more common. But in the second phase, there was a shift towards competency-based evaluations, leading to a decrease in the percentage of traditional evaluations (2.2%) and an increase in the percentage of competency-based evaluations. This development was necessary. As shown in the figure, 1.8% of the norm and 4.5% of the competence have already been assessed.

Fig 2: Students' final results on assessing writing skills.



Source: Own elaboration.

Thus, it is essential that students understand the concept of competency-based criteria in the writing process because it provides clarity in educational expectations, allowing students to focus on the development of specific writing skills. Understanding these criteria encourages self-management of learning, enabling students to evaluate and improve their own work. Additionally, it allows them to effectively leverage feedback, preparing them for academic and professional challenges by aligning their skills with real-world expectations. Ultimately, this understanding motivates students to pursue excellence and provides them with a valuable transferable skill in various life contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

Students' writing skills in the early stages of university education are often found to be less than satisfactory. Writing is considered both a productive and linguistic skill, and its development has been shown to have a positive impact on students' comprehension, critical thinking, and creative abilities, making them more inclined to engage in research and thoughtful reflection during writing activities. In this regard, the implementation of systematic writing processes benefits from the application of assessment principles, including considerations of appropriateness, reliability, practicality, originality, and effective communication. These assessment criteria contribute to a more rapid acquisition of writing skills by students. Recognizing the distinctions between university-level writing tasks and organizing the writing process aids in enhancing students' understanding of free expression in writing. Research indicates that writing skills prove beneficial only when applied in accordance with appropriate evaluation standards. Therefore, the comprehensive study presented can serve

as a valuable resource for guiding both teachers and students in their future writing endeavors.

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