CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PROJECTIONS

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Arabic, a synthetic language, and English, an analytic language, employ not only two different grammatical systems but also two totally different writing systems. As a result, Arab EFL learners seem not to be able to write competently and fluently in English. Not only do they make grammatical errors when they compose in English, they also make errors that are due to their unfamiliarity with the English rhetoric system and to their ignorance of the conventions of English writing. What makes the task of writing well in English harder for the Arab learners of English is that the EFL programs in many parts of the Arab world pay very little attention to the teaching of writing, and do not have any well-constructed programs that are meant to produce learners who are able to write good, correct and proper compositions in the target language. In fact, the ultimate goal of any EFL program should be to create learners who are able to communicate well not just verbally but also in writing.

The present study aimed at examining the writing skills of 80 native speakers of Arabic majoring in English at the English department of the Faculty of Education, Taiz University, Yemen (see section 3.2 for further details). It generally sought to shed light on the problems and difficulties of such learners when composing in English. Additionally, light was also cast on the strategies these learners employ when they compose in English. The aims and objectives of the present study can be summarized as follows:

(1) To assess the linguistic competence of the subjects of the study by means of
   (a) Language Ability Test (LAT) and (b) Composition Writing for EA.
(2) To conduct a Needs Analysis of the learners’ writing-related needs through
   (a) Learners’ Questionnaire and (b) Teachers’ Questionnaire.
To review and assess the teaching materials and methods currently in use in the English department concerned.

To find out the correlations between 1, 2, and 3 above; and to explain the problems in the light of a mismatch between the learners’ competence, needs and expectations on the one hand and the structure of the program, the materials and methods on the other.

To achieve the objectives stated above, a set of elicitation procedures were used to cross-sectionally collect data pertaining to the three components of the study: (a) Assessment of Students’ Competence, (b) Learners’ Needs Analysis and (c) Review and Assessment of the teaching materials and methods currently in use in the English department at TU. As already indicated, the data of this study was obtained from a randomly selected sample of eighty students, 20 students, 10 males and 10 females, from each of the four levels of the undergraduate program at TU (see details in the Methodology chapter, section 3.2.1).

Data pertaining to the first component of the study was obtained by means of a Language Ability Test (LAT) and Composition Writing Assignments for EA. LAT included questions (1-6), which were objectively evaluated and question (7), however, was mostly subjectively evaluated. Data obtained through LAT was marked, tabulated and then presented both in numbers and in percentages. Tables and graphs were also prepared to compare the performances of the four levels in this proficiency test (see section 4.2.1 for analytical details).

Learners’ compositions were examined to look into writing-related problems that these learners encountered at the text level. For instance, length of the text (no. of words and no. of sentences), and the average length of sentence (L = w/s) produced by each of the four groups of learners were worked out (see section 4.2.2 for detailed analysis and comparisons across levels). Errors detected in students’ composition writings were tabulated and classified into syntactic, lexical, morphosyntactic, miscellaneous and spelling categories. To
present this data in terms of percentages, syntactic, morphosyntactic and miscellaneous errors were divided by the number of sentences produced by each of the four groups of learners. Lexical and spelling deviations, on the other hand, were divided by the number of words produced by each of the groups. Tables and graphs were prepared to compare the frequency of occurrence of learners' errors in the five main categories mentioned above (see section 4.2.3 for analytical details).

Data pertaining to the second component, Needs Analysis, was obtained through learner questionnaire and teacher questionnaire. Learner questionnaire included 15 items pertaining to (a) learners' attitudes towards writing in English, (b) the English program in general and (c) learners' strategies when composing in English (see section 3.2.1.3 for details). Participants were required to read the questionnaire statements carefully and circle one and only one of the five options provided. Learners' responses to the questionnaire items were sorted out and, with the inbuilt capacities of SPSS, were presented in numbers and percentages. Mean scores of learners' responses of the various groups as well as the cross-tabulations proved useful in comparing the responses of the learners (see analytical details in section 4.3.1).

Teachers' questionnaires included 14 items pertaining to (1) the English program in general, items 1-3, (2) effectiveness and usefulness of the teaching materials and methods used in teaching writing skills, items 4-7, (3) learners' attitudes towards writing in English, items 8-11, and the last three items (12-14) of the questionnaire pertained to some external factors such as use of audio-visual aids, overcrowded classrooms, etc. Data was then sorted out to find out how the 10 surveyed teachers responded to the questionnaire. Accessibility to SPSS aided in presenting data in terms of numbers as well as in percentages.

Data pertaining to the third component of the study, unlike the other two components, required some subjective procedures. For instance, the structure of
the program (L1 to L4) was examined in terms of number of hours devoted to different components in every semester, and how many of these components were taught through English and how many through Arabic. Language courses were examined in detail for content and methods of teaching. In addition, the teaching materials used for teaching Reading & Composition courses in level one and two were carefully examined (for details see section 4.4). The syllabi of the English program along with the course descriptions were also examined for clues regarding how much emphasis the program places on language development in general and on writing skills in particular.

Analysis of the three components of the present study yielded the following results:

1) Learners’ scores on questions 1-6 of LAT, which are objectively evaluated, show that L1 learners, as expected, got the lowest score in comparison with the other groups. There is, however, almost no difference between the performances of L2, L3 and L4 learners in these questions. This reveals that the competence gained by L2 learners is not further enhanced in L3 and L4 (see section 4.2 for a detailed discussion).

2) Students’ scores on question 7, which was more or less subjectively assessed, indicate that L3 learners scored better than the L2 and L1 learners. But L4 learners, as shown below, outperformed all the other groups.

**FIGURE 21**
3) Combined results of LAT showed that L1 learners scored the lowest. Scores of L2 and L3 are almost identical indicating that the competence of L3 is not enhanced despite the exposure they got in the linguistics and literature courses. L4 learners just slightly outperformed L2 and L3 learners and this is due to their relatively better performance in question 7, the translation question, which is assessed subjectively.

4) The average length of a sentence produced by the learners showed that they wrote rather long sentences and this is ascribed to mother tongue interference. While L2 learners produced longer sentences than the other groups, L4 learners produced, though considered long, relatively slightly shorter sentences (see section 4.2.2 for further details).

5) Learners also produced incomplete sentences, excessively used coordination at the expense of subordination and showed little familiarity with the English punctuation system.

6) Scrutiny of learners’ compositions indicated that the highest number of errors was committed by L1 learners. Comparatively L2 and L3 learners made a lesser number of errors and L4 learners committed the lowest number of errors in the five main categories. It is noticed that most of the errors made by the four groups were syntactic errors, indicating that writing grammatical sentences is a hurdle for many of these learners.

7) Learners’ as well as teachers’ questionnaires showed that the English program in question failed to adequately address learners’ writing skills.

8) The program is directed neither towards improving learners’ oral skills nor their writing skills.

9) The teaching materials and methods used in teaching writing are not best suited for learners’ needs and the program does not encourage learners to do creative writing.

10) Translating from Arabic into English is a strategy these learners seem to use when composing in English.
11) Inefficient use of audio-visual aids, overcrowded classrooms and insufficient classroom teaching hours for language (rather than content) seem not to aid learners to improve their competence in the target language.

12) Due to their being new in the program, L1 learners provided rather amateur responses but a positive attitude as reflected in responses to items 1-4 of the questionnaire. L2 learners also seem to be positive and, roughly speaking, content with the program. On the contrary, L3 and L4 learners are rather disillusioned and not at all satisfied with the current program because they expected a better treatment of language content.

13) L1 R&C materials are rather simplistic and are followed by equally simplistic exercises that do not pose a challenge. Attention in those R&C courses seems to be geared towards improving learners’ reading skills. Besides, selection of R&C materials is rather eclectic, sometimes random, and ad hoc is the word to describe the way R&C classes are conducted. In short, R&C materials are neither based on learners’ linguistic competence, nor based on a systematic selection and grading of the materials.

14) The complexity of L2 R&C materials, on the other hand, is far beyond learners’ linguistic competence. Not only are texts complex, they are also approximately 10 times longer than those prescribed for L1 learners. Exercises following those texts are also complex and intended to improve learners’ vocabulary and to sharpen their reading comprehension skills. Very little attention, however, is paid to encourage creative writing skills.

15) Three hours a week is certainly not adequate to satisfactorily address learners’ reading and writing skills in level two.

16) Reduction of language oriented courses to a minimum in L3 and L4 caused their competence not to be further enhanced in these two levels.

17) Absence of R&C courses in L3 and L4 caused learners not to get any programmed training in writing skills.
18) Literature and Linguistics courses are content oriented and though they indirectly help learners learn more about the language, they practically do very little, indeed, to tackle learners' language skills in general and writing skills in particular.

19) Overloading learners with Arabic-medium courses does make learners spend plenty of time reading Arabic and this undoubtedly causes their competence in English to suffer. About 50% of the courses are taught in Arabic in L1 which is quite high, but this load gets noticeably reduced in L2 and L3. It is not, however, reduced in L4, where approximately 40% of the courses are conducted in Arabic.

5.2 Recommendations and Future Projections:
5.2.1 For the program and application of research in ELT in Faculty of Education, Taiz University

Based on the results of the present research, some vital changes and improvements need to be incorporated into the current English program. Put differently, a reorientation of the current program is a necessity to make sure that the various components of the program can be tuned to facilitate English language learning for Arab Yemeni learners of English, who are trained to be English teachers.

Let us begin with some infrastructure-related aspects, which are crucial for the success of any EFL program.

1) To tackle the problem of overcrowded and heterogeneous classes, more teacher training institutions need to be established to meet the ever growing need of English teachers across the country. Admission to the department should only be granted to those who pass the entrance exam, a written test, and an oral test to make sure that the candidates who are at a comparable level of proficiency in English are enrolled in the department. The outcome of this
process will be not only smaller and manageable classes but also entrants, who are linguistically more homogeneous.

2) Teacher-training institutions should be provided with some necessary equipment such as language labs, overhead projectors, and other audio-visual learning facilitators to help teachers do their job more effectively. This will not only aid teachers make their classes more interesting but will also help get learners exposed to English spoken by English-speaking people and not to be confined to the language input provided by their non-native English teachers. With the aid of such exposure and planned component of oral communication skills, the students can learn to speak English with English prosody.

*Teachers' Training requirements:*

3) English Education authorities need, for example, to periodically hold some training sessions and workshops for the in-service teachers so as to keep them abreast of the latest in the field (pedagogical theories and practices).

4) Teacher training programs are to include orientations to (a) techniques and methods in ELT (b) materials and structure of a program (curriculum design and syllabi) (c) use of technology, audio-visual aids, language labs, etc.

5) Teachers need also to adopt integrated approaches and communication-oriented teaching methods and approaches and do away with methods that ascribe to GTM. In other words, teachers need to be totally convinced that use of learners’ mother tongue is not likely to help learners improve their competence in English. English should be taught through English, in other words.

6) Libraries that are well-equipped with the latest ELT publications (books, journals, periodicals, etc) need to be accessible to the teachers as well as to students as passing to be English teachers.
The following section includes suggestions and recommendations for the overall curriculum and different components of the program.

**LEVEL ONE**

7) Six 6-hour a week Language oriented classes need to be introduced, in two semesters, in level one to make sure that learners meet their teachers twice a week to provide them with adequate exposure in English.

8) The two 3-hour a week Literature courses ought to be language oriented so as to help enhance the competence of learners in English.

9) Except for the Arabic language and Islamic studies courses, the Arabic-medium seven courses offered in level 1 should be conducted in English or bilingually at this level.

**LEVEL TWO**

10) Six 6-hour a week language oriented courses, in two semesters, need to be offered so that learners can meet with their teachers twice a week for intensive exposure in English.

11) The two 3-hour a week Literature courses need to be language oriented to further enhance learners’ competence in the language.

12) The two 3-hour Linguistics courses, which are content oriented, need to teach English through Linguistics and need to make learners more knowledgeable of how the language works.

13) The three 2-hour university requirement courses, which are taught through the medium of Arabic, ought to be taught in English at this level.
LEVEL THREE

14) Three 3-hour a week language oriented courses need to be offered to further enhance the linguistic and communicative competence achieved in level two.

15) The three 3-hour Literature courses, which are content oriented, should also indirectly help improve learners' general competence in English.

16) The two 3-hour a week content oriented Linguistics courses should aim at sharpening learners' general competence in English and to make them more aware of aspects pertaining to the phonological and morphological nature of the English language.

17) The three 2-hour a week faculty requirement courses, which aim to familiarize learners with ELT methods and approaches and with matters relating to curriculum design and analysis, need to be maintained and need to motivate learners to take part in classroom discussions in English.

18) The two 2-hour university requirements, which are taught in Arabic, should be taught in English.

LEVEL FOUR

19) Three 3-hour a week language oriented courses should be offered to get learners of this level further exposed to English and to consequently develop their proficiency in the language.

20) The three 3-hour a week Literature courses need to strike a balance between being content oriented and language oriented. Such courses should also focus on improving learners' aesthetic sensibilities.

21) The three 3-hour a week Linguistics courses should also be both content and language oriented.
22) The two 2-hour Practicum courses should be maintained to enable learners to get some training in how to teach English in schools. But the teaching practice of learners needs to be monitored by some of the department teachers to ensure that they (the learners) take it seriously and to also profit from the feedback given to them.

23) The Five 2-hour faculty and university requirement courses, which are taught in Arabic, need to be taught in English to maximize learners’ exposure to English. At the highest level of the program there is no reason why they should not be taught in English.

Keeping in mind the linguistic competence and linguistic needs of the learners, the following recommendations pertain to teaching materials (selection and grading) and methods for the ELT for Education in Taiz University.

24) Language oriented classes need not be handled by those fresh graduates who are hired as lecturer assistants due to the shortage of faculty in the department. Such classes need to be taught by well-trained and experienced teachers who know what to teach and how to teach.

25) Selection of teaching materials should not be random but should be rather systematic and in accordance with certain principles of selection, grading, frequency, analogy, systematicity, etc. Material selection should in fact be compatible with the actual linguistic competence of the targeted learners and not in vacuum. Careful selection of materials, in other words, would ensure learners’ interaction with the material and would certainly add some new building blocks to their level and knowledge of English.

26) Involvement and active participation of learners in language use and language activities need to be maximized. Passive learning and rote memorization of words and sentences, on the other hand, should be discouraged. Since learners use English only in the classroom, teachers should make every effort to encourage learners to communicate as much as possible in
English and to (a) provide them with situations that are quite similar to those
encountered in real-life situations, (b) compensate for this by introducing video
lessons to show English in native English situations.

27) Literature courses taught in levels one and two should be language oriented
to provide further reinforcement to learners' language skills. Abridged and
simplified, adapted literary texts can provide such learners with meaningful
input in English that would certainly enhance their linguistic capabilities.

28) Except for Arabic and Islamic Studies courses, university and faculty
requirements that are taught in Arabic should be taught in English to maximize
learners' exposure to English or bilingually at level one.

29) More Language oriented courses should be offered in L3 and L4 to ensure
further enhancement of learners' competence in English. Reduction of such
courses to a minimum incontrovertibly leads learners' competence to stagnate.

30) Linguistics courses need to be accompanied by some exercises that
motivate learners to be active participants in the classroom and not be mere
recipients of knowledge and not having to say anything in the target language.

31) Literature courses prescribed for L3 and L4 learners should introduce
learners to unabridged literary texts and to encourage learners to read them and
not to be confined to the notes and ready-made answers prepared for them by
the teachers. Such courses need also to develop and enhance learners' aesthetic
sensibilities.

32) L1 and L2 R&C materials need to be selected with more care and
precision. Selection of such materials need to be systematic, and in accordance
with learners' competence level. Selection and grading of the R&C materials
within the levels, as well as across levels should be done on similar principles
of complexity, systematicity and frequency. Ad hoc and random selection of
materials should be avoided at all costs.
33) Performance of learners in composition writing and in LAT indicates that they need to learn to write more grammatically correct sentences. To achieve this, functional-grammar exercises should be given emphasis to enable learners to produce more grammatical sentences.

34) The program also needs to make learners more aware of the English rhetoric system and how discourse is created in English so that they can compare and contrast with the way discourse is organized in Arabic, which includes length of a sentence (as a proposition), coordination and subordination in sentences, coherence and cohesion in texts, and not to forget appropriate punctuation system.

5.2.2 For Pedagogical theory and further research in the area:

To begin with, discrete point methods and approaches, which treat the four linguistic skills of the foreign language separately, are still very much in use by the English program under discussion. Integration of the four language skills, which is meant to make these skills reinforce one another, does not seem to exist in this program. Not only this, the teaching methods and approaches in the current program seem to ascribe to the structural methods, which give more emphasis to grammar teaching. Grammar teaching in level one and two, for instance, is taught deductively and not inductively and this shows that learners are hardly given any opportunity to practice and use the grammatical rules of the language to produce their own sentences. All in all, the discrete point approaches do not seem to significantly improve learners’ competence in the target language. Integrated approaches and communicative function oriented approaches and methods need to substitute such outdated methods so as to ensure reinforcement of the four language skills. It is worth mentioning to point out that though such communicative function oriented approaches have been around for quite some time, they are not fully implemented or put into practice and this shows that there seems to be a missing link between pedagogical theory and practice in the EFL situation in that part of the world. So some
further research in pedagogical theory is still needed to help bridge the gap between theory and practice in such an EFL situation, where actual teaching practices and such communication-oriented approaches hardly intersect.

When Arab learners of English attempt to write or compose an English text, they encounter many different types of problems and difficulties. There is no doubt that it is not possible to address such a variety of problems and difficulties in one single study. The present research attempted to examine in detail the case of the English department of the Faculty of Education, Taiz University. The focus in this study is on writing skills. Further research is still needed and the following section indicates the areas of research interest which need to be pursued further.

1) An in-depth study of errors to find out the nature of cognitive processes underlying learning of English as a FL by Arab learners.

2) An in-depth study of transfer errors which could take care of a comparison and contrast between Arabic and English to provide an understanding of the two systems and the nature of transfer when Arab learners learn English or vice versa.

3) An in-depth study of the phonological analysis of English and Arabic including segmental and supra-segmental phonemes, stress patterns, pitch and prosody of the two languages with a view to provide a structured program for teaching of spoken English to Arab learners.

4) The data for my study includes a number of errors of spellings which could be used along with a CA of the two phonological systems, the two writing systems so as to understand the process of learning to write in English.

5) The three components in my study include an overview of the teaching materials and methods used for ELT in the English department of the Faculty of Education, Taiz University. We need to further examine in detail the curriculum and syllabi for ELT, selection and gradation of materials for the same and teaching methods employed for an EFL program using a set of objective and subjective procedures. Such a study could help us identify and

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define the parameters which may be used for constructing any EFL program with details of materials and methods as well.

6) The present study has a component on Needs Analysis which was conducted by means of two questionnaires, one for the teachers and the other for students. This component needs further investigation with more elaborate questionnaires and a larger database across programs and universities in Yemen/Arab world. Such a study will help us find out more about the soc-psychological aspects (attitudes, aptitude, motivation), soc-eco-cultural aspects (aspirations and job prospects, goals and targets of the younger generation), the soc-eco-political factors (language and education policy and planning, use of media) and soc-linguistic factors such as providing ESL situations, exposure to English outside the classrooms through popular culture and media thereby providing opportunities for use of English outside the classrooms.

Given a chance I would like to pursue this research in the direction suggested above and make fundamental changes in the program at Taiz University in particular and teaching of English in general for a complete reorientation in the current trends in ELT in Yemen.