

The Relationship between Writing Self-efficacy Beliefs and Final Examination Scores in a Writing Course Among a Group of Arab EFL Trainee-teachers

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Abstract: This correlational study focused on research questions regarding (a) EFL trainee-teachers' perceptions about their own writing, (b) the possible relationship between trainee-teachers' perceived self-efficacy in writing and their achievement in a writing course, (c) the relationship between class attendance and final examination scores in a writing course, and (d) the relationship between trainee-teachers' final examination scores in writing and their GPA. The participants were forty-four female EFL trainee-teachers at Sohar University in Oman during the academic year 2009/2010. For collecting the data, four measures were used: namely, the Writer Self-Perception Scale (WSPS), the final examination scores in a writing course, attendance records and General Point Average (GPA). The results show that there is no significant relationship between the subjects' self-efficacy beliefs about themselves as writers and their performance in a writing course. Moreover, results show that students who are absent fewer times from Advanced Writing 1, scored higher final examination marks for the course. Results also indicate that students who have higher GPA scores achieve higher final examination marks for Advanced Writing 1.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Writing course, Arab Ed, Trainee- teaching, Yemen.

Introduction

Writing, which is the main concern of the present study, is a complex process and competent writing is frequently accepted as being the last language skill to be acquired. Few people write spontaneously and few feel comfortable with a formal writing task (Hamp-Lyons and Heasley, 1987; Lavelle, 2006). It presents a challenging task for both native and nonnative speakers (Kroll, 1990). While many studies have explored various aspects of teachers' perception about teaching writing (cf., Moore, 2000), few have considered the relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance. The present study aims to investigate EFL trainee-teachers' writing self-efficacy as linked to their performance in a writing course.

To provide a theoretical background for the present study, the teaching of writing to Arab students, the importance of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, writing self-efficacy beliefs, self-efficacy and academic performance and the effect of course attendance will be briefly reviewed in the following section.

Teaching Writing to Arab Students

Writing in a foreign language is not an easy task and requires a lot of practice and training to produce a well-accepted written form. It is a courageous experience especially for Arab students whose native language is not from the same origin to the English language (Tarawneh, 2009). According to Kharma (1985) a major feature of weakness in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in the Arab World is that most of the practice given is limited to language use at the sentence level. Moreover, he maintains that:

1. There is no systematic preparation for composition;
2. Naturalness is usually sacrificed for the sake of convenience or practicality; and
3. Guided writing is mainly practiced as composition tasks.

Furthermore, Al-Hazmi (2006) observed that teaching writing in the Arab World could be described as "guided-composition at lower levels and free-composition at higher levels, with a mixture of both at intermediate levels" (p. 36).

The teaching of writing in the Arab world seems to be product-oriented (Al-Hazmi, 2006). According to Steele (2004) this approach to writing is "a traditional approach, in which students are encouraged to mimic a model text, which is usually presented and analyzed at an early stage" (p.1). Therefore, what is important, when a student writes, is the product that the student creates which should be neat and errors free. In this approach the role of the writing instructor is to lecture on grammar, punctuation, and usage, to make assignments, and to write comments and corrections in red inks on the final draft (Pomona, 2003).

Teaching Self-efficacy Beliefs

Recently, a number of teacher education practitioners and researchers have investigated the efficacy beliefs and attitudes of trainee-teachers towards teaching and classroom practices (cf. Campbell, 1996; Gorrell, Ares, &Boakari, 1998; Young, 1998; Lin and Gorrell, 2001; Tercanlioglu, 2001).These researchers, among others, have shown the benefits of giving trainee- teachers a chance to express their beliefs, views and attitudes. Bandura, (1997) suggested that teachers' beliefs in their abilities to teach students and influence their achievement are a very strong

indicator of the effectiveness of teaching. According to Young (1998) trainee- teachers' efficacy beliefs are important for the following two reasons: (a) trainee-teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward teaching may affect their decisions on how to use different teaching strategies and methods in their career (b) Their attitudes and views derived from their efficacy beliefs may have a direct impact on their students' affective state.

Moreover, Karabenick & Noda (2004) observe that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes are important "because they affect teachers' motivation to engage with their students, which can, in turn, translate into higher student motivation and performance" (p. 56).

Teaching self-efficacy beliefs are shaped by a number of factors, among which teachers' earlier experience as learners and their teacher training experience are the most commonly cited. Pajares (1992) suggests that the early-shaped beliefs will become highly resistant to change and they are found to be powerful in influencing one's behavior in later life. Cross cultural studies in different countries have claimed that trainee- teachers vary in the degree to which they believe themselves to be efficacious in their teaching (Campbell, 1996; Gorrell, Ares, &Boakari, 1998; Ringrose, 2003; Cakiroglu et al, 2005; Sridhar and Badiei, 2008). For example, Lin et al. (2002) explored the influence of education and culture on American and Taiwanese trainee-teachers' efficacy beliefs. They found that in both countries trainee-teachers' efficacy beliefs might be influenced by the context of academic programs, by their increasing experience as teachers as well as by cultural perspectives.

Writing Self-efficacy Beliefs

Self-efficacy beliefs are individuals' general perceptions of their capabilities in different areas such as writing. For instance, the statement "I think I am a good writer" suggests the writer's perception that s/he has the capability to write effectively. Writing efficacy discussions are usually centered on three degrees of efficacy: high, mid and low. Those with high confidence in their writing ability are usually labeled as having a positive sense of writing efficacy or high writing efficacy. Similarly, those who have moderate levels of confidence in their writing ability are described as having a moderate sense of writing efficacy. Those with low levels of confidence in their writing ability are often referred to as having less confidence, doubting their writing ability, having low writing ability, or having a less positive sense of writing efficacy. It has been shown that learners with high self-efficacy see difficult writing tasks as challenging and work attentively to master them, using their cognitive strategies productively (Lavelle, 2005; Lavelle, 2006).

In the literature, we can find a number of research studies related to writing self-efficacy beliefs. For example, Al-Hazmi (2006) reported how his subjects reflected on their own writing in Arabic and English in a

composition classroom. His subjects were 19 Saudi EFL college students at King Khalid University. He collected his data using an open ended questionnaire allowing the subjects to reflect on how they normally write in Arabic and English. The study revealed the difficulties that the subjects faced when writing. They were linking and arranging ideas, reviewing ideas and other general difficulties. Studying another group of Saudi EFL university students, Al-Hazmi and Scholfield (2007) reported that the language difficulties in writing which their subjects faced were in discourse organization, paragraphing and cohesion.

Moreover, Al-Sharah (1996) carried out a study of the perceptions of a group of 210 Jordanian EFL students of writing in academic settings. He concluded that his subjects showed lack of awareness of important writing strategies such as outlining, peer conferencing and group collaboration.

In another study, Wachholz and Etheridge (1996) studied the writing self-efficacy beliefs of a group of pre-service teachers. They found a relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance. Along the same line, Lavelle (2006) examined teachers' self-efficacy for writing as to determine the relationship of scale scores to writing performance using two analyses. The first analysis investigated the relationship of low self-efficacy scale scores to writing quality and the second one tested for differences in writing quality based on classifying students as deep or surface writers. The results supported a moderate negative relationship to writing performance.

Self-Efficacy and Academic Performance

There is a significant body of research studies that have clearly demonstrated that students' self-efficacy beliefs relate to their academic performance (Zimmerman, 1989; Schunk, 1991; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992; Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 2002; Webb-Williams, 2006). These studies suggest that high self-efficacy is positively associated with academic achievement. Self-efficacy affects effort and volition, including persistence (Bandura, 1977). Furthermore, Pajares and Valiante (1996) found that skill, ability and previous accomplishments are significant predictors of self-efficacy and academic performance.

Mooi (2007) explored the relation of students' self-efficacy beliefs to examination performance. The results showed that the self-efficacy measures studied were significantly related to examination performance. The findings showed that the inaccuracy of self-efficacy beliefs was related to examination performance. Students who underestimated their examination marks and course grade, namely the pessimistic students, tended to do better in their performance and the opposite held true for students who were optimistic. One plausible explanation was that pessimistic students felt a greater need to increase effort to prepare for examination and course work, and in the process achieved better results.

Christensen; Barnes & Rees (2002) studied the relationship between students' beliefs about their abilities in an accounting course and their examination performance in the course. They examined students' ability to accurately predict their course standing in mid-semester and its relation with success in the course, using path analysis for a sample of 214 students. Their findings showed that the more conservative a student's self-efficacy, the higher the final examination scores and the final course grade. They concluded that when students' predictions are below outcomes, subsequent performance improves, and when predictions are above outcomes, subsequent performance deteriorates.

Webb-Williams (2006) studied the relationship between self-efficacy and science performance of primary school children. Her subjects, who were fifty-two English primary school children aged between 10 and 12 years, completed self-efficacy questionnaires. The study concluded that self-efficacy was positively correlated with academic performance.

The general writing literature contains a number of research studies that address the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of Western students, and how these may change over time and between genders, but it seems there is a relative lack of studies that examine the relationship between Arab students' perceptions of themselves as writers and their performance in writing.

The Effect of Class Attendance

Throughout the literature on foreign and second language teaching, one can find some studies that relate academic performance to class attendance. For example, based on their findings of a research study on a finance course, (Didia and Hasnat, 1998) reported that the effect of class attendance on students' performance was found to be positive. Moreover, Krohn and O'Connor (2005) reported that though attendance was positively related to student performance in terms of total overall data, no relationship was found between attendance and examination scores using intra-semester data. In the present study, the impact of class attendance on the participants' final scores in Advanced Writing course was investigated.

The Present Study

Significance of the Study

An understanding of the relationship between the trainee-teachers' self-perceptions of their own writing and their actual performance in a writing course is important because it can guide their trainers in working with those who have high or low efficacy beliefs. Therefore, the present study was carried out for the following two reasons: (1) this study

documents a relationship between writing self-efficacy beliefs and course performance in a university writing course. (2) While writing self-efficacy studies have been studied extensively in Western countries, there is a dearth of research studies on writing self-efficacy beliefs using data on learners studying in Arab institutions of education.

Aims

The main aims of this study were as follows:

1. To understand EFL trainee-teachers' self-perceptions of their own writing.
2. To understand the relationship (if any) between trainee-teachers' writing self-efficacy beliefs and their final examination scores in a writing course.
3. To understand the relationship (if any) between trainee-teachers' class attendance and their final examination scores in a writing course.

Study Questions

The following research questions were generated to guide the inquiry:

1. What are the EFL trainee- teachers' perceptions about their own writing?
2. What is the possible relationship between trainee-teachers' perceived self-efficacy in writing and their achievement in a writing course?
3. What is the relationship (if any) between class attendance and final examination scores in a writing course?
4. What is the relationship (if any) between trainee-teachers' final examination scores in writing and their GPA?

Study Limitations

The scope of this study is limited in terms of the following aspects. It is based on the perceptions of the participants as expressed in response to the 38 items of the questionnaire distributed on five domains. Furthermore, the population of this study is limited to the First Level trainee-teachers in the Department of English, College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Sohar University in the Sultanate of Oman during the academic year 2009/2010. The subjects were not chosen randomly, and therefore, caution should be taken in making generalizations from the results to other contexts.

Terms Definition

Self-efficacy beliefs: The researcher adopts Bandura's (1977) definition which states that self-efficacy is a person's beliefs or expectations about his/her capacity to accomplish certain tasks successfully or demonstrate

certain behaviors. Bandura postulates that these expectations determine whether or not a certain behavior or performance will be attempted, the amount of effort the individual will contribute to the behavior, and how long the behavior will be sustained when obstacles are encountered (Brown, 1999).

Writing: Chakraverty and Gautum (2000) define writing as "an important part of language learning, it is essentially a reflective activity that requires enough time to think about the specific topic and to analyze and classify any background knowledge" (p.22). Furthermore, it is "a process that occurs in three major stages which are: the planning stage, writing the first rough draft and revising and proofreading" Meltzer (2000: p. 1).

Writing achievement: Grades are standardized measurements of varying levels of comprehension within the subject of writing. Grades can be assigned as a range (for example, 1, 1.5, 1.75, 2, 3, or 4).

Teacher training: is defined as the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school and wider community. Another term used in the literature is: teacher education

Class Attendance: (ATTEND) is defined as the number of times a student is absent from class lectures according to the following scale: 1 (absent for 4 times or more), 2 (3 times), 3 (2 times), 4 (1 time) and 5 (0 time).

Method and Procedures

Participants

The participants in this study were forty-four Omani trainee-teachers enrolled in a teacher preparation program at the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Sohar University during the academic year 2009/2010. The common characteristics of the subjects were that they were all females and in their early twenties. They were all speakers of the same first language (Arabic). They all also did English as a foreign language in the course of their secondary and basic education in Oman (total of 9 years). All the subjects involved in this study went through a University Preparation Program (UPP) for one year before being placed in the English teacher preparation program at Sohar University which was described in its Quality Audit Portfolio (2010) as "...a University of excellence in the Gulf Region" whose mission was "to produce talented, knowledgeable and creative graduates who because of their experiences at Sohar University will be known for their employability, leadership, entrepreneurial and ethical attributes and who will improve the economy

and society of Oman and the Gulf Region and be able to participate in the global economy” (p.9). The trainee-teachers were divided into two groups of about 22 students in each group. They were of mixed abilities in their English proficiency. Most of them were at the expected level, while a few of them were either below the expected level or above the expected level. They all attended seven courses of 17 credit hours per week for about 16 weeks of the academic year 2009/2010.

Writing Courses

Advanced Writing, which is the main concern of this study, is the first of six writing courses the participants need to take. It was taught by the researcher, a native speaker of the subjects' first language (Arabic). The aim of this course was for students to learn, through task-based activities, how to write coherent and cohesive, meaningful academic texts. These would be appropriate to a selected range of the most common forms of academic writing. They would incorporate the range of rhetorical writing forms such as description, narration, comparison, analysis, argument, and research report. The trainee-teachers were exposed to teaching writing based on the process approach. According to Furneaux (2004) "process writing represents a shift in emphasis in teaching writing from the product of writing activities (the finished text) to ways in which text can be developed: from concern with questions such as "what have you written?", "what grade is it worth?" to "how will you write it?", "how can it be improved?" (p. 13). A course syllabus of Advanced Writing 1 is provided in Appendix A.

Instruments

The following four instruments were used in this study:

1. Writing Self-efficacy Beliefs Instrument

The first instrument used in this study was the Writer Self-Perception Scale (WSPS) which was developed by Bottomley; Henk & Melnick (1998). It consists of 38 statements to evaluate students' beliefs of their own writing. WSPS contains five sub-scales. These five dimensions, the number of items in each dimension and the sample items are shown in Table (1) below.

Table (1):

The Five Dimensions of the Scale, the Number of Items and Samples

Dimensions	Total number of items	Sample Item
General Progress (GPR)	8	Writing is easier for me than it used to be.
Specific Progress (SPR)	7	The words I use in my writing are better than the ones I used before.
Observational Comparison (OC)	9	I write better than other students in my class.
Social Feedback (SF)	7	People in my family think I am a good writer.
Physiological States (PS)	6	I like how writing makes me feel inside.

These sub-scales are consistent with the theoretical construct of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997).

The WSPS utilized a Likert scale format with response categories of: strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree. Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient for this study sample ranged between 0.76 and 0.88. Frankel and Wallen (2006) suggested that the reliability coefficient should be at least 0.70. This was in line with existing evidence regarding the validity and reliability of the subscales in the American environment which ranged between 87 and 91(see Bottomley; Henk & Melnick (1998).

2. Writing Achievement

The researcher used the students' final scores in the Advanced Writing course during the first semester of the academic year 2009/2010. They consisted of the following:

- Portfolio = 20 %
- Mid Semester Test = 20 %
- Participation (Tasks)= 10 %
- Final Examination = 50 %

3. General Academic Achievement

The subjects' General Point Average (GPA) at the end of the academic year 2009/2010 was used as an indicator of their academic achievement. They were obtained from university records. The scale used in giving the final grades and the GPAs is provided in Appendix B.

4. Class Attendance

Advanced Writing course attendance data were obtained from the instructor's class attendance records. Data on trainee-teachers' final examination marks in Advanced Writing and Attendance as well as the overall General Point Average (GPA) grades, were obtained from the

university records increasing the reliability of such information (Wilson, Ward, & Ward, 1997).

Data Analysis

Out of 42 questionnaires completed by the class of 44 trainee-teachers, only 41 could be used for analysis. Two completed questionnaires were rejected because they were not properly filled in. The items of the questionnaires were coded using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Program according to the five point Likert scale as follows: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) undecided, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree (research question 1). Similarly, the data obtained from the university records (research questions 2 & 4) were coded according to a four point scale (see Appendix B). The data obtained from the instructor's class attendance records were coded according to the following scale: 1 (absent for 4 times or more), 2 (3 times), 3 (2 times), 4 (1 time) and 5 (0 time) (research question 3). Then, basic descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) as well as Spearman correlation coefficients were computed. The significance level in this study was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results and Discussion

The survey questionnaires were used to collect data in an attempt to answer the first question of the study. The results that are related to investigating the EFL trainee- teachers' perceptions about their own writing are presented in Table (2) below. This question was investigated through calculating the means and standard deviations of the subjects' responses to the five subscales of the questionnaire. Table (2) below displays the descriptive statistics of the five sub-scales of the WSPS.

Table (2):

Means and Standard Deviation of the Five Scales

Dimension	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
GP	41	1.00	3.00	2.1220	0.45799
SP	41	1.00	3.00	2.0244	0.35269
OC	41	1.00	3.00	2.0000	0.38730
SF	41	2.00	3.00	2.2683	0.44857
PS	41	1.00	3.00	1.9756	0.41760

The examination of data collected through the WSPS permitted a description of trainee- teachers' perceptions of themselves as writers, and gave information about which dimensions of self-perception students endorse most and least. Table (2) above shows trainee-teachers responses to

the questionnaire expressed as a mean score to the 38 statements that were grouped into five sub-scales. The Social Feedback (SF) dimension came first with a mean of (2.2683) out of 5, while the Physiological States (PS) dimension came last with a mean of (1.9756).

From the data presented above perhaps we can tentatively conclude that quite a number of EFL trainee-teachers themselves are not committed writers, which make them unable to establish a good role model in writing.

Pearson correlations were calculated to examine the interrelationships among the five dimensions of the scale. The results displayed in Table (3) below indicate that the correlations among the five factors were not high. The exception came under the dimensions of Specific Progress (SP) and Physiological States (PS). The correlations were significant with 0.738 and 0.343 respectively.

Table (3) below presents Spearman correlation coefficients among all the variables used in the study.

Table (3):

Spearman's Correlation Coefficient between the Five Scales

		GP	SP	OC	SF	PS
GP	Correlation Coefficient	.				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.				
	N					
SP	Correlation Coefficient	.738(**)	.			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.			
	N	41				
OC	Correlation Coefficient	.000	.000	.		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000	1.000	.		
	N	41	41			
SF	Correlation Coefficient	.074	.115	.288	.	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.645	.475	.068	.	
	N	41	41	41		
PS	Correlation Coefficient	.271	.343(*)	.000	.302	.
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.086	.028	1.000	.055	.
	N	41	41	41	41	41

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

To answer the second question of this investigation, Spearman correlation coefficients were computed to investigate the relationship between the participating trainee-teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about

themselves as writers and their final marks in the writing course as shown in Table (4) below.

The final examination scores, W. Mark, averaged around (64) marks and subjects obtained an average of (2.75) out of the four-point scale and a final overall course grade of C+ (see Appendix B). These results seem to suggest that there is no significant relationship between the subjects' self-efficacy beliefs about themselves as writers and their performance in the writing course. The correlation statistics between the final examination scores in Advanced Writing 1 (W. Mark) and the self-efficacy variables of Observational Comparison (OC) and Social Feedback (SF) are negative. This finding does not lend support to the finding reported by Webb-Williams (2006) who concluded that self-efficacy was positively correlated with academic performance.

Table (4):

The Relationship between Subjects' Self-efficacy Beliefs and their Academic Performance

		GP	SP	OC	SF	PS	W. Mark
GP	Correlation Coefficient	.					
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
	N	41					
SP	Correlation Coefficient	.738(**)					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.				
	N	41	41				
OC	Correlation Coefficient	.000	.000				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000	1.000	.			
	N	41	41	41			
SF	Correlation Coefficient	.074	.115	.288			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.645	.475	.068	.		
	N	41	41	41	41		
PS	Correlation Coefficient	.271	.343(*)	.000	.302		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.086	.028	1.000	.055	.	
	N	41	41	41	41	41	
W. Mark	Correlation Coefficient	.004	-.127	.122	.146	.088	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.982	.428	.446	.364	.585	.
	N	41	41	41	41	41	41

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The aim of the third question of this study was to determine whether there was a relationship between class attendance and final examination scores in a writing course. To answer this question, Spearman correlation coefficients were computed as shown in Table (5) below:

*Table (5):
The Relationship between Subjects' Class Attendance and their Final Examination Scores in Writing*

		W. Mark	Attend
W. Mark	Correlation Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	
	N	41	
Attend	Correlation Coefficient	.376(*)	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.
	N	41	41

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Referring to Table (5) above, the final examination marks in Advanced Writing 1 (W. Mark), correlates positively and significantly with student characteristic variable of attendance (Attend), showing that students who are absent fewer times from classes, score higher final examination marks for Advanced Writing 1. Based on the results of the present study, we can say that the trainee-teachers at Sohar University are more likely to obtain higher course scores when they attend classes and participate in the class activities.

To answer the last question which asks whether a relationship between trainee-teachers' final examination scores in writing and their GPA exists or not, Spearman correlation coefficients were used as illustrated in Table (6) below.

Table (6):

The Relationship between Subjects' Final Examination Scores in Writing and their GPA

		W. Mark	GPA
W. Mark	Correlation Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	
	N	41	
GPA	Correlation Coefficient	.701(**)	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	41	41

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table (6) above indicates that the subjects' final examination marks in Advanced Writing 1 correlates positively and significantly with their GPA scores indicating that students who have higher GPA scores achieve

higher final examination marks for Advanced Writing 1. The findings of the present study suggest that success in a college course is dependent on some factors. More specifically, it is the students' attendance as well as their academic performance (GPA) that is of most importance when predicting course scores.

The results of this study may help teacher trainers to see the world from their students' perspectives and prepare themselves to understand variations in the ways trainee-teachers perceive themselves as writers. Trainee-teachers will experience a more positive self-efficacy beliefs and learning experience when guided by a trainer who promotes a positive attitude towards writing.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The present study has explored the relationship between the trainee-teachers' self-perceptions of their own writing and their actual performance in a writing course. The results obtained from the questionnaires answered the research questions addressed in the study. It is possibly one of the first studies on self-efficacy beliefs among Arab EFL trainee-teachers. The results of the present study did not confirm what the literature has established that self-efficacy is a predictor of college students' academic performance. This finding suggests that attention to trainee-teachers' self-efficacy beliefs should become an explicit feature of teacher training in such programs.

This study is limited to a group of trainee-teachers taking a writing course at Sohar University in the Sultanate of Oman during the academic year 2009/2010. Therefore, the results may need to be used cautiously. Future directions for research in this area would be to survey a larger sample of trainee-teachers and to expand the scope of the study to more courses and to other universities in the Sultanate of Oman or in the Gulf region. Furthermore, future research should include other possible factors that might affect the final results such as gender, age, linguistic level and nationality. The findings of this study merit replication and, if confirmed in larger samples, have implications for the people concerned in Omani TEFL, and more specifically for the development of the teacher training program.

A major recommendation of the present study is that teacher trainers should pay more attention to writing skills and try to possibly change their students' attitudes towards writing because students often think of this skill as a boring requirement rather than a life skill.

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