

**An Investigation into the Correlation between IETLS Test  
Preparation Course and IELTS Writing Score and Students'  
Reflective Journals**

بحث لدراسة العلاقة بين امتحان قياس مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية العالمي ودورة  
الإعداد للإمتحان على طلاب تخصص التربية في كتابة مواضيع التقرير الوصفي  
للموقف التدريسي

by

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## **Abstract**

English language usage is becoming a priority in higher education studies in the UAE. Testing English skills for EFL learners through the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) has been given greater attention as a requirement for students' admission and graduation. Moreover, the need to develop language skills for the test is important through preparation, since it adds to the language knowledge of EFL learners and train them to deal with skill related tasks. The preparation courses can change students' attitudes toward language learning for academic purposes, which can also affect their learning of other courses at universities. That can impact the students' written texts and assignments that require writing reports and understanding specific genres. This study aims to investigate the correlation of IELTS test scores and preparation courses and students' writing of reflective journals in education. A discourse analysis of different levels' reflections gained from three participants were selected from one of the federal colleges in the UAE was carried out. The data were gathered from students' scores in IELTS reports, samples of preparation course materials and interviews with participants.

The results of the research found that IELTS test scores cannot be guaranteed to measure the students' true ability. Preparation courses seem to have an impact on the language learning ability, writing performance and understanding. Two participants benefited from taking the IELTS preparation courses, while the third had good language skills developed due to other factors such as; college studies, strong language foundations in schools and a desire to learn English. The study also revealed that there are other challenges affecting IELTS test reliability and the correlation with reflections such as the test assessors, different marking schemes and different requirements of IELTS test and academic assessments.



## الملخص

تعد مهارات استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية من الأولويات في مؤسسات التعليم العالي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. و يعتبر امتحان مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية لمتعلمي اللغة كلغة أجنبية من خلال امتحان تحديد مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية (IELTS) محط اهتمام كمتطلب للقبول والتخرج. وعلاوة على ذلك، فإن الحاجة إلى تطوير المهارات اللغوية للاختبار يعد في غاية الأهمية، لأنه يضيف إلى معرفة المتعلمين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وتدريبهم على التعامل مع المهام ذات الصلة بالمهارات اللغوية وتعزيز استخدام اللغة. وبالتالي فإن دورات إعداد الطلبة للإمتحان قد تسهم في تغيير سلوكيات الطلبة تجاه تعلم اللغة للأغراض الأكاديمية والتي قد تؤثر في تعلم المواد الأخرى على المستوى الجامعي. وهذا من شأنه أن يؤثر بشكل رئيسي على أعمال الطلاب الكتابية والواجبات التي تتطلب كتابة التقارير وفهم الأنواع الكتابية الأدبية المختلفة. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فهم العلاقة بين درجات امتحان قياس مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية (IELTS) ودورات الإعداد للإمتحان ومهارة الطلاب في كتابة مواضيع التقرير الوصفي للموقف التدريسي في التعليم. وقد تم اختيار تقارير وصفية لطالبات من مستويات مختلفة في إحدى الكليات الاتحادية في دولة الإمارات. و قد تم جمع درجات المشاركين في البحث من تقارير الامتحان المحصلة للانضمام لكلية التربية والتخرج منها، بالإضافة إلى عينات من المواد والمصادر التي تم استخدامها خلال دورات الإعداد والتدريب للإمتحان والمقابلات مع المشاركين في هذا البحث. و أظهرت النتائج الرئيسة للبحث أن درجات اختبار امتحان قياس المهارات في اللغة الإنجليزية لا يمكن أن يقيس المستوى الحقيقي للطلاب لوجود عوامل أخرى قد تؤثر على مدى مصداقية الإمتحان. ومع ذلك، أظهرت النتائج أيضا أن لدورات الإعداد تأثير كبير على قدرة الطلبة في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية وبالأخص تطوير مهارة الكتابة وفهمها. ويظهر من البحث أن إثنان من الطلبة المشاركين في البحث قد استفادوا من هذه الدورات التدريبية على اللغة، في حين أن الطالبة الثالثة تملك مهارات ممتازة في اللغة بدون أن تشارك مسبقاً في دورات الإعداد بسبب عوامل أخرى مثل: الدراسة الجامعية و أساسيات اللغة المكتسبة في المراحل المدرسية ورغبة الطالبة في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. وقد أوضحت الدراسة بأن هناك تحديات أخرى قد تؤثر على مدى مصداقية اختبار (IELTS) وعلاقته مع كتابة التقارير الوصفية للموقف التدريسي مثل: اختلاف مقيمين الاختبار واختلاف معايير التقييم ومتطلبات الاختبار والمتطلبات الأكاديمية.

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# **An Investigation into the Correlation between IETLS Test Preparation Course and IELTS Writing Scores and Students' Reflective Journals**

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The use of English language in the Arab world and UAE has largely grown. It has an impact on the academic achievements and studies. Hence, one of the requirements to be enrolled at a university in the UAE is to have the English language skills meeting specific standards. Students at all levels must develop their English as they progress through their school years until reaching the university level. Due to the rapid changes in education, testing language skills has become an important topic to measure students' language ability. Several tests have been used as a tool to exit high school and proceed to higher education, or to exit into a desired major at universities. Research has been conducted on the effectiveness of these tests as a tool of language measurement not only within the UAE and worldwide (Freimuth 2014; Gitsaki et al. 2014; Raven 2011).

The IELTS test, which is the focus of this study, reflects students' skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking. These tests may impact the students' performance of language usage within a university or school tasks (Ata 2015). It has been used as a tool of entrance to higher education institutions in the UAE, as well as exiting foundation studies into specific majors of interest (Freimuth 2014). Despite all the data on IELTS efficiency, it still differs from one culture to another and one student to another. This is because various conditions affect its implementation and the test takers that leads to a band. The amount of test preparation by the students is another factor to judge the test results (Gitsaki et al. 2014). Students at a particular level or from similar cultural backgrounds might have common errors when taking the test, which can be revealed through either

the band or during preparation courses (Ata 2015; Hughes 2003) The IELTS score has created a study plan to those joining colleges and universities within EFL communities. A research stated, it can be represented through students' coursework and tasks demonstrated by how they are employing English (Gitsaki et al. 2014). In addition, students develop different writing skills through IELTS preparation courses, and they develop an understanding of different discourse. The students learn how to write coherent and cohesive texts, which enhance their IELTS writing and also writing other genres (Qin & Uccelli 2016).

### **1.1. Rationale and Statement of the Problem**

Due to the rapid development in the UAE education system and the English language growth in different educational fields, the teaching and learning standards have been raised (Gitsaki et al. 2014). Therefore, students must be able to meet those standards to progress through their studies. The English language being a means of communication within higher education institutions, has become more important. Hence, students must demonstrate and increase their abilities in English skills (Freimuth 2014). Higher education focuses on enrolling students with specific results in IELTS to be eligible to receive the target education. Recently, the relationship between students' performances in higher education and their IELTS band has been a topic of debate and concern of educators in the EFL context (Gitsaki et al. 2014; Panahi & Mohammaditabar 2015).

Colleges' language standards are designed to meet the requirements of the job market, and ensure graduating students who are able to use English effectively (Moore & Morton 2005). As part of students' progression, special programs are designed to improve students' skills in English, as well as raising the bands in all IELTS skills. This helps students to exit programs with the highest qualifications (El Massah & Fadly 2017). Research has considered the importance of IELTS

preparation courses and the correlation between the amount of work done in advance and the IELTS band (Johnston et al. 2014).

Regarding my experience in the field of education, the focus of IELTS preparation and IELTS scores can be at a high demand for programs such as education, where future English teachers must have a language knowledge. Students in such a program must reflect language development through coursework and assignments, which represent language skills (Gitsaki et al. 2014; Johnston et al. 2014). Teachers tend to use reflective journals as tasks assigned and graded in terms of language abilities. Preparing for IELTS and the correlation between scores and the writing of reflections is a topic researchers are still debating.

This study attempts to investigate the correlation between IELTS writing band and students' performance in reflections assigned at higher education institutions. It also investigates how preparation courses for Emirati students have affected the quality of writing reflections as EFL learners. The research aims to identify the correlation between the IELTS band and the progression of Emirati college students' reflections, focusing on the analysis of students' journals reflecting on their practicum experiences.

## **1.2. Significance of the Study**

The IELTS exam is an important tool in the EFL context worldwide and in the UAE particularly (Raven 2011). As the students reach higher educational levels, the importance of the exam increases. The significance of this study comes in line with the recent updates in the policy of higher education institutions, which entitle students to proceed through the levels when they get the required IELTS band. Since the development of learners in the second language has become a



centralized issue in higher education institutions (Freimuth 2014). The research would support teacher researchers in understanding the field of EFL teaching and learning to extend understanding on relevant issues facing language learning.

Reflective journals have a great impact on teachers' performances and on shaping understanding of what has been learned and taught (Burton et al. 2009). The implementation of the functional approach through preparation course instructions and writing reflections, has shown a great impact on students' understanding of reflective journals, which will be explained in the literature review chapter (Cao & Guo 2015). The use of reflections is a significant part of teaching and learning within the education department at universities, which builds on students' knowledge and improves teaching skills. This study considers the discourse analysis of the reflective genre, examining factors that improve the understanding of reflections discourse.

Investigating the effectiveness of IELTS preparation courses can also lead to enhance teachers' knowledge and perspectives, through selecting beneficial materials to enhance students' achievements (Gitsaki et al. 2014; Raven 2011). Additionally, teachers will be able to assess their abilities in teaching genres, as well as enhancing English language teaching skills. This is also significant in the UAE context, where students and teachers consider IELTS test preparations as important step to achieve the target score (Moore & Morton 2005). Furthermore, the research is seeking more information on the correlation between IELTS scores and students' written coursework (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010). This could lead the teacher to implement further strategies to motivate students in taking further IELTS preparation courses. The research can suggest ideas to some colleges and universities on the effectiveness of IELTS as a policy of acceptance for freshmen and graduates.

### **1.3. The Purpose, Research Questions and Hypothesis**

The main reason for writing this research is to investigate through discourse analysis the correlation between IELTS scores and students' production of reflective journals within the Education department in one of the higher education institutions in the UAE. The study also examines the impact of IELTS course preparation on students' achievements and understanding of the reflective genre. It will consider other factors revealed by the study and investigations of previous studies on IELTS exams, as well as on teaching English skills to students at higher education levels. The hypothesis is that students with prior preparations for IELTS could perform better in writing reflective journals. Further hypothesis is that students' differences in IELTS bands could correlates with the achievement in writing reflections.

The research questions help gain further information on the correlation between IELTS writing band and preparation courses and students' reflections. The questions are as follows;

- How can IELTS preparation courses impact students' writing of reflective journals?
- What is the correlation between the IELTS writing band and students' writing of reflective journals?

### **1.4. Structure of the Report**

The research consists of five chapters, starting with the introduction. It discusses in brief an outline of the research issue and rational related to IELTS score, IELTS preparation in the UAE higher education and writing education reflective journals. It also provides an insight into the UAE context through presenting the significance of the study, and the main purpose of the research along with the investigation questions. Chapter 2 contains the theoretical framework and literature review,

which presents other researchers' views and theories on discourse analysis, IELTS tests, preparation and related practices. Chapter 3 provides an overview on the methodology implemented for the investigation which includes the qualitative research method to collate data. It takes into consideration the validity, reliability, setting, instruments and ethical considerations. In the fourth chapter, the findings and data analysis are identified according to the research questions. Finally, a research discussion, conclusion, recommendations and limitations are provided in the last chapter.

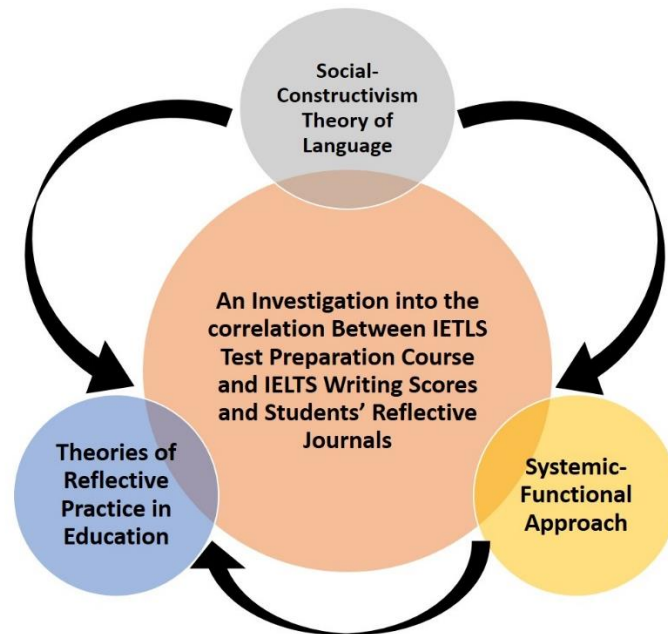
## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

This chapter focuses on key theories and a review of literature related to the discourse analysis of reflective journals and the IELTS testing systems implementation and performance. Close attention will be paid to the theoretical and historical research which helped in shaping the framework of the study. Current and recent studies will be reviewed on the relation between IELTS bands, preparation courses and students' writing of reflective journals. Literature that provide studies related to the UAE context will be considered to support the investigation in this research.

### **2.1. Theoretical Framework**

The foundation of this study consists of three different theories leading to the construction of the theoretical scheme. The correlation of Constructivism theory, systemic-functional theory and the theories on reflective practice and writing in education will be discussed in details individually (Figure 1). One reason for choosing these theories is that they are considered as major components in this field of study, which will support and explain the findings related to the correlation between IELTS scores, preparation course and the writing of reflections. Furthermore, as EFL learners construct language through interaction which makes the existence of the Social-Constructivism theory achieves greater importance among the other theories. Both the systemic-functional theory and the theories of reflective practice in education are key components of the reflective writing, teaching written genres in preparation courses and IELTS testing, which are the focus of this research.



**Figure 1:** A chart shows the correlation between the theories in the theoretical framework.

### **2.1.1. The Theory of Social- Constructivism of Language**

The Constructivism theory is based on work done by both Piaget and Vygotsky, upon the belief that the *disequilibrium* process of previous knowledge and new conceptions can lead to a cognitive change in the language (Slavin 2014). Learners in this theory are viewed as builders constructing their knowledge through interacting with the surrounding environment, people and objects, which is demonstrated through the construction of meanings, understanding and interpretations (Freeman & Freeman 2001). According to researchers, Vygotsky's work in the 1930s revealed that learners can perform better with the help of a more knowledgeable person to reach the *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)*, which pointed out the significance of social interaction in language learning (Berk 2009; Brewster et al. 2002; Slavin 2014). Constructivists take their main foundations from Vygotsky's theory, particularly from the four key principles which are; ZPD, social interaction, mediated learning and cognitive practice (Slavin 2014).

Researchers have found that social interaction using the target language holds great importance in sharing information and exchanging knowledge (Emmitt et al. 2003; Slavin 2014). Therefore, language learners can construct their knowledge within a social context where they interact with people at a similar knowledge level or above (Emmitt et al. 2003). Interacting with people and objects help to expose learners to the target information to construct perceptions of the new language if they are challenged to reach their ZPD (Lightbown & Spada 2013). The ZPD is referred to as what students are unable to do on their own, but it can be done when provided with help from a teacher or a knowledgeable peer (Lightbown & Spada 2013; Slavin 2014). In IELTS preparation courses, students are getting that support to reach higher levels in learning and specifically in writing, which helps to reach the ZPD to learn the skills correctly with the guidance of a teacher (Panahi & Mohammaditabar 2015; Slavin 2014).

The other theorists such as Bruner and Halliday emphasized the significance of communication within a rich language environment and joint activities where teachers are facilitators (Vialle et al. 2008). With reference to Vygotsky's work, constructivism theory puts greater emphasis on scaffolding and assisted learning. Thus, students' language learning can be guided by a teacher in a purposeful way to achieve the target learning goal (Slavin 2014). Another major factor in Constructivism theory is the extensive implication of cooperative learning in teaching and learning (Freeman & Freeman 2001; Lightbown & Spada 2013). Therefore, students can learn, practice and discover new concepts through sharing ideas with others at a similar learning level (Brewster et al. 2002). This is related to the study in the implementation of writing process as a foundation to construct texts and write effectively (Freeman & Freeman 2001; Lightbown & Spada 2013).

With regard to teaching instruction in the Constructivist approach, top-down processing is the main process in language teaching rather than bottom-up. These learners start working out the complex problems, and then with the teacher's guidance, sub-skills can be discovered (Emmitt et al. 2003; Slavin 2014). Here learners are given the actual task to work with rather than a simplified one, which will enable them to construct complex skills gradually (Berk 2009; Slavin 2014). Another major component of the constructivist approach is that learners are supported by the teacher in the process of learning through discovery. As found from researches that regarding Bruner's hypothesis that learners would be fully involved with principles through experimenting within a real context (Berk 2009; Brewster et al. 2002).

In addition, self-regulated learning is considered a further concept in Social-Constructivism theory, in which the learner is able to break complicated aspects into smaller points to reach the targeted solutions (Slavin 2014). Hence, this concept exists in reflective journals writing as students' use it in order to identify issues and related solutions for them (Harmer 2004; Quirke & Zagallo 2009). Consequently, learning will be directed toward a higher level of mental abilities being assisted by the teacher, which is one of Vygotsky's essential concepts called scaffolding (Freeman & Freeman 2001; Vialle et al. 2008). The implementation of the Constructivist approach to writing allows a chance for creative writing. With this approach, students will be able to respond to events and identify solutions to problems using mental abilities and skills (Slavin 2014).

### **2.1.2. Systemic-Functional Approach (SFL)**

The systemic-functional approach (SFL) to genre writing was first developed by Halliday. It emphasizes the use of language within a genre to build meanings in humans' minds (McCarthy & Carter 1994). This approach influenced the understanding of how the genre is implemented in

teaching language and text analysis (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010). It reflects the link between the language and the social context of the genre, as it also focuses on how the language is employed purposefully into chronological order (Hyland 2007). Halliday's study represented a classification of seven functions used by learners, which stressed the fact that learners use the language purposefully within the surrounding environmental conditions. Later, students can employ that language within strict communicated contexts (Emmitt et al. 2003). Emmitt et al. (2003, p.32) also mentioned that "Halliday collapsed his original seven functions to three major ones that became the basis for functional systemic linguistics; ideational, for the communication of ideas; interpersonal, for the expression of feelings; and textual, for the relationships within a text". Despite the fact that the systemic functional approach focuses on language's textual use, it also emphasizes how meaning is communicated through the text. Similarly, it pays attention to how that meaning is constructed within a genre with attention to how the learner is using the language (Derewianka 2000).

Furthermore, SFL is consolidated with the social function and context that is integrated with the structure of language. Therefore, the term '*systemic*' refers to the availability of language choices to learners that influences the language structure within a text to get the meaning of these contexts. The term '*functional*' represents how the language correlates with these particular contexts, which all impact the realization of the social context and purpose (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010; Derewianka 2000). The classification of semantic structures of Halliday were based on the social context and situation, which creates what is called '*genre register*' (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010; Hyland 2007). Through that linkage of the situation types with lexical and grammatical aspects, the register consists of '*tenor*', '*field*' and '*mode*'. The participants involved in the genre are referred to as



‘tenor’, while ‘mode’ means the description of the language role or the channel of communication used; whether it is written or spoken. The ‘*field*’ of the genre is related to what actually takes place or the subject-matter of the text, however some texts might not represent all of these components through the register, one or two aspects might be missing (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010; Derewianka 2000). This is related to the study focus in terms of the identification of the register components within reflective journals as a genre.

Regarding the main aim of the SFL approach to genre, which focuses on assisting learners’ linguistic needs in choosing related functions and creating meanings related to the context. Martin and et al. (cited in Bawarshi & Reiff 2010; Emmitt et al. 2003) have built further on Halliday’s work, considering that the genre links the culture to the situation discussed. Furthermore, the register works in communicating that situation and linking it to the language. As researchers mentioned that Martin’s et al. pedagogy later changed into what is called the “*teaching-learning cycle*”, consists of three stages. The first stage presents related models of the taught genre, considers the specific social purpose and linguistic elements serving that purpose. The second step is that both teachers and students are involved in a discussion and then start the genre construction. Finally, learners depend on themselves in the text construction through research, check work with the teacher and edit drafts (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010; Derewianka 2000; Emmitt et al. 2003). However, some critics discussed concerns that SFL focuses on how the language operates within social situations not on the formal language as grammar and other linguistic aspects (Derewianka 2000). The steps of the “*teaching-learning cycle*” are linked to the research focus and questions about the impact of IELTS preparation courses in genres understanding and construction.

### 2.1.3. Reflective Journals in Education

Reflections are often used by teachers to evaluate teaching abilities, strategies and skills, which enable educators to build on and criticize own abilities (Kyriacou 2007). Reflective journaling is based on reasoning drawn from the teacher's own practice and covers not only the teaching part, but also the learning process and the professional development of educators (Johnson 1999). Reflective written journals offer a chance for teachers to identify solutions to occurring problems and recognition of incidents. Dewey (1933-1938) and Schon (cited in Zeichner & Liston 1996), were both famous theorists who viewed and reframed reflective teaching and teachers. Dewey (cited in Zeichner & Liston 1996) viewed the initial process of reflections by encountering a struggling event, so teachers would go back to that issue and provide an analysis of the experience. Findings from researches shown that Schon divided reflective teaching into two different frames which are '*reflection on action*' and '*reflection in action*' (Johnson 1999; Zeichner & Liston 1996). The aspect '*reflection on action*' can occur before an action or afterward, or it can happen unexpectedly so that requires the teacher to adapt the instructional method. Therefore, the identification of solutions can happen spontaneously which doesn't require the teacher to plan in advance for them (Johnson 1999). This aspect will be considered in the analysis of reflections and identifying students' understanding of reflective writing.

Not only does reflective journal writing impact teachers' professional development, it also affects EFL teachers' language development. Being a native or nonnative speaker requires reflection on language use, grammar and functions throughout the lesson (Brewster et al. 2002). In fact, when teachers are not reflective, they are faced with issues in thinking critically about their teaching, which make them unable to find alternatives (Kyriacou 2007; Zeichner & Liston 1996).

Researchers have found that writing reflective journals can clarify the link between the implementation of theory and practice (Kyriacou 2007; Quirke & Zagallo 2009; Spencer 2009). In addition, reflective writing should include teachers' goals and perspectives of their teaching skills and instructions as well, which promotes an in-depth in analysis and mirrors the essential focus for teachers (Kyriacou 2007; Quirke & Zagallo 2009). Similarly, reflective writers often try to represent accuracy in narrating the events as they are given the freedom to include information to reflect on. Hence, teachers are provided with opportunities to learn and improve experiences along with their language (Burton 2009). Thus, the research intends to look at the correlation between the writing of reflections and factors of language development through discourse analysis.

## **2.2. Literature Review**

### **2.2.1. English for Academic Purposes (EAP)**

Learners at higher education levels are required to take notes from lectures, write academic essays and manage referencing skills in English, which all lead to the concept of English being learned for academic purposes (EAP) (Harmer 2001). EAP focuses on cognitive skills and developing language concepts to succeed at a university level. This can be achieved not only through learning essential skills such as reading, writing, speaking and listening, but also by using critical thinking skills (Wilson 2016). With English being the language of instruction to EFL students, it's meant to provide comprehensible input on the content being taught, learned or practiced (Buri 2012). This concept originally formed by Krashen (cited in Buri 2012; Lightbown & Spada 2013) leads to shape students understanding of the concepts acquired through the use of the second language. Thus, in EAP writing and reading are learned within a context of interest and employed further in the social experience context, rather than learning them as isolated skills. Wingate & Tribble (2012)

assert that a learner will develop a critical language awareness through practicing within a context related to their cultural background and learning experience. One of the key elements in learning EAP is to understand “*how*” to communicate the ideas clearly to teachers and other students. As a result, students must enhance their ability of reasoning and justifications of events and experiences being discussed (Asoodar et.al 2016; Wilson 2016). In addition, students in higher education are required to draw resources, assumptions and notes from the field of learning to develop their arguments when using English in academic contexts (Krekeler 2013).

### **2.2.2. Reflective Journals (Narrative Genre)**

Narrative written pieces are essential components in the world of English writing genres, they are narrations about sequenced events used to identify a solution for a plot or problem (Queensland Department of Education 1994). This genre works through the employment of language functions to shape a meaningful context to readers. It also builds on a textual situation through the imagination of events to represent the writer’s ideas, experiences and solutions (Derewianka 2000). Hence, this genre starts with an *orientation*, using the language to introduce characters and setting the scene. Next, it deals with *complications* of issues arising in the narration, and then resolving these issues or crises (Bamberg 2011). Therefore, a narrative genre varies from other genres in the type of the linguistic features implemented. For instance, it entails more use of linking time words to show sequence, it is mostly written in the past tense and involves describing events (Derewiaka 2000; Hall & Minnix 2012).

Teachers’ reflective journals consist of a narration of events based on the teacher’s history and experience, so they are considered as part of the narrative genre (Hyland 2007). McGuire et al. (2009) mentioned one of the important characteristics of writing reflective journals is that it

enhances free writing skills, gives the writer the chance to involve a variety of expressive phrases and words to represent their thoughts. Consequently, reflective writing benefits student teachers in improving their writing, so the more they write during their practicum experiences, the better they develop writing skills and critical thinking. Furthermore, they develop a sense of self-correction through learning from previous mistakes about their teaching abilities, and the variety of language use as they grow through the years (Harmer 2004; Quirke & Zagallo 2009). This point is linked with the previous literature regarding self-regulated learning mentioned in the theory of Social-Constructivism, and is part of generating the reflective written pieces (Slavin 2014). Similarly, researchers found that learners' reflections are engaged unconsciously in using terms and expressions to deliver the target meaning of the events. They also develop an understanding of their own language abilities and other people who will read their reflection; mainly teachers who will assess them (Brown 2007; Spencer 2009). Thus, teachers' reflections tend to include opinion expressions, words representing feelings, linking words to show reasoning and indicate notable events (Brown 2007). Finally, this mixture of writing journals freely and English use by EFL students converge in building learners' knowledge of writing, English language skills and teaching experience (Spencer 2009; Quirke & Zagallo 2009).

### **2.2.3. Register, Lexical and Grammatical Cohesion**

The vocabulary used plays a great role in the judgment of the genre, since it represents different purposes of different texts. These lexical items are identified as the '*text register*' (Derewianka 2000). The register is decided by the situation described in the genre, which helps present the *field*, *tenor* and *mode* clearly (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010). "The genre will determine the overall structuring of the text and the register will determine the language patterns found within the text" (Derewianka

2000). In addition, the register of any written text involves what is known as the *topic vocabulary* which is related to the writing text subject-matter, and communicates the meaning to the reader (Harmer 2004). Moreover, register is not only about the use of topic vocabulary within a written piece, but also ensuring the tone of the formality of the writing genre (Lukin et al. 2011).

Other factors such as lexical and grammatical cohesion affect the clarity of any writing genre (Harmer 2004). Furthermore, the comprehensible combination and sequencing of the ideas within a text through the use of lexis and grammar help to consolidate its coherence (Leech et al. 2001). Consequently, this enables readers to track the writer's ideas and how the text meaning is communicated through writing (Derewianka 2009). Within the EFL context, learning to write a specific genre depends on the amount of mental work from the student's side, in addition to the use of language vocabulary and grammatical aspects (Cameron 2001).

When writing narrative genres, the text must guide readers through language features and grammatical components. This helps the reader understand the correct sequence of the narrated events comfortably by understanding the main problems and reaching solutions (Mortensen et al. 2009). On the other hand, the memorization of written pieces which some EFL students are used to do before tests can impact negatively both the cohesion and coherence of the genre. As a result, these learners will be restricted in the genre trap affecting their productivity of creative meaningful writing (Harmer 2004; Mahlberg 2006). Other devices such as word repetition and collocations can increase the lexical cohesion of the genre. Meanwhile, grammatical cohesion can be increased through the use of pronoun and articles referencing and inference, tense agreement, using linking words and ellipsis (Harmer 2004; Mortensen et al 2009). The consideration of text register,

grammatical and lexical cohesion are part of the discourse analysis conducted in this investigation to identify language development as the learners progress through the study levels.

#### **2.2.4. IELTS in EFL Context**

The International English Language Testing System (IETLS) has become a crucial topic of discussion among educators. Many researchers argue that there are differences between the students' knowledge and their performance in the IELTS test (Ata 2015; Panahi & Mohammaditabar 2015). It is true that there are other factors which impact IELTS tests in EFL contexts beside knowledge and language performance, such as gender, age, language motivation and interest (El Massah & Fadly 2017).

Within the UAE context, IELTS has become an important test for students joining higher education institutions, which determines their level of study based on test performance (Freimuth 2014). Due to the noticeable change in the economy and English being a central language of communication, teachers have to keep up and work on improving English language skills. This is the major focus of higher education institutions in the UAE in terms of equipping EFL Emirati students with English skills to meet the standards of the work force and community (Gitsaki et al. 2014; Raven 2011). This point is largely linked to the preparations of IELTS which is also linked to the teaching of EAP for college students (Gitsaki et al. 2014). Therefore, a great deal of emphasis is given to academic writing in IELTS preparation courses (Moore & Morton 2005). In spite of the differences between preparation components and academic writing courses at college levels, they all help to build EFL students' language skills (Gitsaki et al. 2014; Moore & Morton 2005). Educators teaching test skills and writing must pay attention to the strategies that help students to write cohesive and coherent texts (Hughes 2003). Many researchers believe that the more preparation

done and the more the EFL learners acquire the master the different skills, the better they will perform in the IELTS test (Moore & Morton 2005; Panahi & Mohammaditabar 2015). They also believe that test markers and designed descriptors can affect the reliability of tests, which preparations courses try to achieve as much as possible (Gitsaki et al. 2014; Panahi & Mohammaditabar 2015).

The discussion of related literature to IELTS scores, preparation for the test and other aspects affecting the test can benefit the investigation. This will provide further understanding of similar researches which the study can use as a foundation to identify the impact of IELTS preparations on English writing performance, as well as its correlation with IELTS scores.



## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This investigation seeks a better understanding of IELTS test and preparation courses influence written reflective genres and performance, examined through discourse analysis, as well as considering perceptions of what can benefit written work. This chapter presents the approach followed in this study that explores the sites, population and sampling, the instruments and finally the ethical considerations. Furthermore, it considers the factors of validity and reliability in the conduction of the research and gaining the permission from the department and people involved.

#### **3.1. Study Approach**

The research methods in this investigation are qualitative. This method is structured according to the quality of the collected data such as activities, relationships, resources and conditions related to the research topic and questions. Thus, it requires the researcher to explore more about participants and the research problem based on the perception of a distant educator (Creswell 2012; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). This kind of methodology differs from the quantitative research in terms it considers the quality of the collected data rather than the frequency of occurrence of variables. Some researchers argue that qualitative data collection demonstrates more detailed data regarding teaching and literacy learning in classrooms (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Mills 2014). Another difference is that quantitative data are based on the examination of a hypothesis that provide numerical numbers, explain and provide predictions on a dilemma. In contrast, qualitative data technique deals with the description and data narration to support the understanding of the study (Mills 2014). Mills (2014) mentions that interviews, invention sources like portfolios, observations,

mapping, visual recordings, oral history and narrative stories, journals, diaries, artifacts, archival sources, etc., all are types of qualitative techniques that researchers can combine for data analysis.

It is true that the qualitative discourse analysis of reflective journals is the method followed in this study, but the linguistic corpus required supplementing it with quantitative analysis for some data (Fairclough 2003). The reason for that supplemental quantitative analysis is to support the understanding of the selected text features in the discourse analysis of reflection and consider the development.

### **3.2. Instrumentation**

#### **3.2.1. Interviews**

Formal interviews were implemented to explore the participants' opinions related to the correlation of IELTS scores and preparation course and reflective writing. Structuring the questions in the interview allows the researcher to ask similar series of questions to participants and helps to increase the validity of this tools (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Mills 2014). It is true that interviews are mostly dependent on observations as Fraenkel & Wallen (2009) stated, however, the interviews in this research are based on journals, students' experiences with IELTS scores and preparation course materials as artefacts collected from the participants' preparation course. A set of questions (see appendices) were designated to understand the participants' views, in terms of the impact of preparation courses on their journals writing development and English proficiency, and if there was a correlation with IELTS scores. Written questions conducted as an email interview offers a chance to get deeper perspectives, knowledge and understanding from the participants. A sequence of eight questions that build on one another helps, to provide a clear point on how the students think and what may affect their English language proficiency (Creswell 2012). Each participant will also be

asked to fill demographic data at the beginning and the researcher will ensure their anonymity. A written statement of the interview purpose is provided in the email with the questions, as it was difficult to reach all participants (Mills 2014). A variety of qualitative convergent and divergent question types will be asked to help in the exploration of ideas (Mills 2014). These questions are organized starting with general ones to more specific controversial ones.

### **3.2.2. Journals**

Another qualitative tool for data collection are journals, written by the participants as part of reflection on their teaching abilities during the practicum (Mills 2014). These documents as Creswell (2012) suggested, help a researcher obtain essential information either public or private, which are easily reached as a good recorded source through writing. A set of twenty three journals from the participants were selected, as each journal was chosen from the students' different levels that they had already passed through in education. These reflective journals were written based on their teaching and learning experiences in schools and were part of their course projects. Each journal differed from one to another according to their level of English and the required aspects to be covered in each practicum. The researcher provided a verbal description of the purpose for use of the journal, ensuring that the students' identities would be anonymous. Each reflective journal was numbered according to the level, and organized according to level number after each student's referred letter.

### **3.2.3. Artefacts/ Archival Documents**

The third instrument are artefact collection, which is used to provide further understanding of the problem through visual data (Creswell 2012; Mills 2014). Different researchers used different names regarding these documents, as in Mills (2014) they are as artefacts, while Creswell (2012)

called them audiovisual materials. These materials provide additional data related to the focus of the research that can support the other instruments (Creswell 2012; Millls 2014). Consequently, artefacts of resources, Power Points and materials used during the IELTS preparation course were collected. Furthermore, participants' IELTS scores were collected as archival documents to seek further understanding on the effects of IELTS scores on students' English language proficiency. Two scores from each student were taken, one before joining education and one when they were about to exit the B.Ed. studies. However, student A was not able to find the hard copy of the first report and provided a verbal score which is 5.5.

Furthermore, IELTS band descriptors and education reflection assessment criteria were used as artefacts. The researcher used IELTS descriptors to evaluate the reflections according to the bands in the criteria. The education assessment criteria was also used by the researcher to give the scores A, B, C or D according to the participants' performance in reflections. All artifacts selected and scores are provided in the appendices and have been used after obtaining the permission verbally from the students and signed by the Dean of Academic Operations at the institution.

### **3.3. Methods**

#### **3.3.1. Site and Population**

The research is conducted in one of the UAE Federal higher education institutions, in the education division within that institution. The process of selecting individual population for the study and identifying the samplings was implemented in the Education department, which was based on the students' different levels. Also the researcher ensured they had two different IELTS scores when they joined and were about to exit the program, and considered the fact that the participants were taught by the researcher. The participants were three female students who are majoring as Primary

Generalists teaching English, science and math. These students were selected from different program levels. Student A has graduated, student B is at her graduation year, while the student C is currently in the middle of her study. They all answered the interview questions in details through emailing the questions with answers and agreed to share their reflective journal and IELTS scores.

All the samples were accessible by the researcher who works as an Education Faculty member at the institution. The teaching and learning experiences vary between the students according to their level and teaching practicum experiences. The correlation between the study levels in B.Ed. program, IELTS writing scores and reflective writing are considered demographic data (Table 1). The number of samples collected which were eight from each except for student C seven reflections were collected, participants' number are possibly to be a limitation of this study.

**Table 1: The Participants demographic data**

Student	Major	Number of Reflection Samples	Graduation	IELTS Writing Score Before	IELTS Writing Score After	IELTS Overall Score Before	IELTS Overall Score Before
A	B.Ed. Primary Generalist	8	Yes	5.5	6.5	5.5	6.5
B	B.Ed. Primary Generalist	8	No Final level	5.0	5.5	5.5	6.0
C	B.Ed. Primary Generalist	7	No	5.5	6.0	5.5	6.0

### 3.3.2. Ethical Consideration

The ethical consideration in the study represents the professionalism of the researcher when dealing with participants and maintaining mutual trust (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Mills 2014). As part of the research ethics, getting the permission from the Dean of Academic Operations is essential as

well as the other participants in the research, to enable the researcher to gain access to the resources and participants needed for the study (Mills 2014). The research permission letter given to the Dean of Academic Operations explains the research purpose to gain the approval, to get the needed data collection tools, and explain the possible results expected from the study which was also communicated verbally to him (see appendices). Another important aspect is to explain the research aim to individual participants to gain their acceptance to provide the needed information (Creswell 2012).

The communication and clarity of information with all research parties involved is highly recommended as part of the ethical consideration (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). Before the interviews with the participants were conducted, verbal explanation and brief written information via email were provided. Hence, the participants' response to the email with the questions were considered as approval to participate in the research. Similarly, the obtained journals, IELTS preparation course materials and IELTS test scores from the students were given according to their permission after explaining the purpose of use to them verbally. According to the participant's request, their identities were kept anonymous in interviews and throughout the study. A, B and C letters will be used in the research to refer to each one of the participants. A refers to the student who already graduated, while B refers to the student who is at her last education level. C refers to the student who is in the middle level. The investigation ensures the confidentiality aspects and the study use for academic purposes to avoid any stress or embarrassments that can be caused to participants for sharing the study findings (Creswell 2012; Mills 2014).

## Chapter 4: Results and Data Analysis

### Introduction

The intention of the research is to determine to the correlation between IELTS tests, preparation courses and EFL college students' English language level. This chapter will present the findings and data analysis using the qualitative data. It also investigates the focus group's reflective journals, interviews and artefacts, to seek further understanding through the analysis of data under specific themes following the research questions:

- How can IELTS preparation courses impact students' writing of reflective journals?
- What is the correlation between the IELTS writing band and students' writing of reflective journals?

### 3.1. Students' Understanding of the Genre and Text Register

The discourse analysis in the following section will support the understanding of students' performance and development in reflective writing. That discourse analysis of reflections will be implemented to ease finding answers to the research questions on the correlation between performance in writing reflections, IELTS scores and preparation course.

#### 3.1.1. Genre and Reflections Topic vocabulary

The analysis of students' reflections revealed, they improved understanding of the genre as they progressed throughout their study levels (see reflections in appendices), which was presented through the '*topic vocabulary*' to indicate to the context of reflections and the narrative genre. Since all the reflections were about the same general topic which is the *practicum*, it was noted that the three participants employed the topic words to shape the register of the genre. For example,

words such as *school, students, classroom, lesson plan, teacher* and *lesson* were used frequently in almost all reflections (see appendices). These topic words indicated the context that the reflections discussed, and was noted that the students A and C managed to use the topic words in a more linked structure (see appendices). However, student B developed the use of topic vocabulary in reflections as she progressed through the study levels, in terms of using linked focused topic words related to the main idea of the context discussed (student B's reflections in appendices). For example, in level 7 reflections which was about the *verb to have and family tree lesson*, student B mentioned terms such as *lesson plan, planned, stage, teaching*, etc., which all represented the topic vocabulary of the text and is linked together to narrate the concept. I assume that this development was related to the development of language level and performance in writing.

As the students' progressed through the levels in education, it seems that they understood further the narrative history genre, which was represented through the increased number of *topic words* to narrate events. The students used several words to narrate their experiences to the reader to represent the events' sequence, time and reflect upon own teaching performance (see reflections in appendices). For instance, student A in level 1 reflection used minor *topic words* to indicate the time, such as '*in the third week*'. Meanwhile, she increased the use of sequential narrating words when writing level 7 reflection, such as '*then*', '*firstly*', '*after twenty minutes*' and '*in addition*'. Student A, B and C also demonstrated an understanding of the purpose of writing reflective journals, which represented opinions on their teaching and identified issues along with recommendations (Table 2). I assume that the students developed an understanding of adding sequential topic terms to the narrative as they proceeded in learning further aspects to improve the genre context.



**Table 2: Topic vocabulary used by the participants in almost all reflections.**

Sequential Topic Vocabulary to Narrate Events	Topic Vocabulary to Represent the Context and Purpose of Reflections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My last experience ....</li> <li>• Firstly, ...</li> <li>• Secondly, ...</li> <li>• Thirdly, ...</li> <li>• Every week ...</li> <li>• At the beginning,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students</li> <li>• Lesson plan</li> <li>• Objectives</li> <li>• Classroom</li> <li>• Worksheet</li> <li>• Activity</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• In my opinion...</li> <li>• I think ...</li> <li>• I felt ....</li> <li>• It would be better if ...</li> </ul>

In addition, the most of the reflections of all students used an informal tone with some formality on occasions. They employed the topic vocabulary and expressions to affect the tone of the text. Some of these informal expressions were '*I was delighted*', '*I felt happy*', '*playing hangman game*', '*relation with the student*' etc. On the other hand, the students used words to increase the formality of the context such as; '*rule violations*', '*instructor*', '*my mentor*', '*special need student*', '*school facilities*', '*meetings*' etc. There was also frequent use of the first person pronouns, which raised the level of informality as the writers were narrating the history of their practicum experiences.

### **3.1.2. Reflections as Narrative History Genre Tenor, Field and Mode**

Reflective journals examinations revealed that the texts were written with the intention of being read by an expert, either the student herself or someone with expertise in the education field. This represented the social distance between the writers as being novice teachers writing to supervisors or mentors. Similarly, the roles and relationships between the participants in the reflections were represented through the use of expressions, opinions and feelings, which at certain occasion affected the informality of the texts. All three students included expressions of personal feelings to

describe events within their reflections. Student C used more feelings through the reflections and grew in the experiences and levels (Figure 2). For instance, the reflections seemed to show that the student's first experience started more formal with less opinions and expressions, but the expressions of opinions and feelings increased as she got involved in teaching and learning with some informality of the contexts. It also provided an idea of the student's further comprehension of writing the reflective journal which seemed to be related to language improvement due to progression.

Reflection 1	• I was delighted / Change mood / Happy / Like
Reflection 2	• Have fun
Reflection 3	• I feel / I did very well / Good relation / Very upset /
Reflection 4	• Enjoyed / suitable for students / were challenging / enjoyable / appropriate / I liked / need help
Reflection 5	• I need to focus / pretend / useful of students / the lesson was good / students were busy / a little bit confused
Reflection 6	• Well planned / I should work more / will work hard/ help me get good feedback
Reflection 7	• Work effectively / students were interacting / were playing / I think / involve / were playing the game effectively

**Figure 2: Selected expression, opinions and personal feelings in student C's reflections.**

Student A's reflections all included words, opinions and expressions that represented personal feelings. Opposite to student C, the number of used expressions and terms did not increase from the first reflection to the last, but all of student A's reflections included at least five or more terms and expressions. Perhaps student A understood how to deal with the genre from the first level, and the opportunity to do free writing allowed her to express feelings, expressions and opinions more. This led to reveal the relationship between the writer and participants (Figure 3). It was notable that student A provided her own views in several parts of the reflections to support the balance of

having informal text and relationships with certain formality, presenting a better understanding of reflecting on her own abilities or observed school scenes. An assumption on student A's language performance is that she had a good language knowledge starting from the first level, which could be related to previous strong foundations in language learning.

Reflection 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I was satisfied / my experience / built a good relationship / amazing areas / played a game / special needs students joined / was delighted / felt happy / they were good / inappropriate behavior / kids</li> </ul>
Reflection 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My last experience / very useful / she ended the lesson with a game / she told me / are very important / impressed</li> </ul>
Reflection 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I agree / a brilliant lesson plan / I think / to misbehave / children may be affected / be confident and self assured / use her eye contact effectively</li> </ul>
Reflection 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I noticed / I took notes / I believe / interested in / good learning purposes / I think / I found that</li> </ul>
Reflection 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I tried to enjoy / my teacher / students' second mother / she cares / a lot about them / helps in raising them / I think / being clean / I liked / be better people</li> </ul>
Reflection 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I spent / she supported me / to help me / I believe / she gave me / really comfortable / well organized / affects them positively / excellent learning</li> </ul>
Reflection 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Their teacher / to act / I think / mixed the boys and girls / I showed them / I explained / he believe / I wasn't happy after finishing the lesson / I wasn't feeling well</li> </ul>
Reflection 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I was nervous / I played / I think it would be better if / we discussed together / work together / enjoying / exploring and enjoying their time</li> </ul>

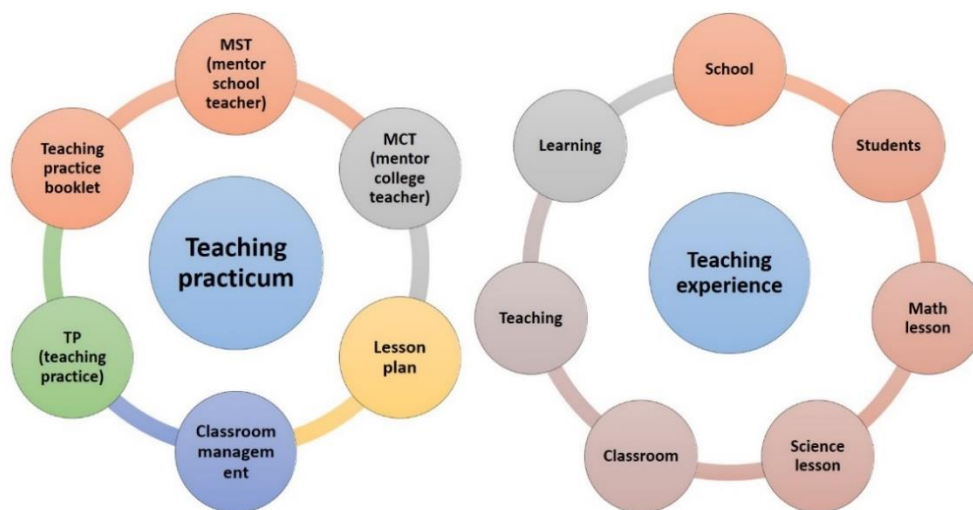
**Figure 3: Selected expressions, opinions and feelings from student A's reflections.**

Student B's reflections got a similar use of personal feelings, views and expressions to student A's which could be due to information acquired through their study years about writing reflections. However, student B added the first person pronoun 'my' frequently to the participants such as 'my students' and 'my teacher'. I assume that as the student proceeded through the years, the relationship with the participants became more important to her, because of the close feelings that the pronoun delivered to the reader (Figure 4). The analysis of reflections showed that all students used the first person pronoun 'I' commonly in their reflections, to indicate the informal exchange and communication between the participants. In addition, the use of first, second and third person pronouns increased the informal sense of communication in the narrative history genre (see appendices).

Today my lesson plan was little bet different , in this lesson <b>my students</b> have describe the pictures and write a story of these pictures . This lesson was enjoyable to them , first I let them see the pictures, then
I have notice that I have a negative thing <b>in my lesson</b> . I have not move around the students more , I am just was standing in front of the white board , I do not know why this have happen , however in my
and he tell us in which class we are going to <b>My MST Mr.Banger</b> was absent so Mr.Louis ask me to go with Mr.Mosten , I stay the whole day with him, he was kind with me , he told me that
his weakness, and that will help a lot during <b>my practice</b> This week was important to me as a teacher because it help to know how to read a story for the students and were should I focus
On Monday, October 24, 2016, I have teach a Math lesson in Rak Academy School <b>my kids</b> were active during my lesson,because I have involve and engage them in my lesson by making a

**Figure 4: Excerpts from several of students B's reflections**

Regarding the field of reflections, the situation took place at school. Therefore, the subject matter of the text was identified as the '*teaching practicum*' and '*teaching experience*'. Student A, B and C used different words and references to indicate the experience such as '*school*', '*classroom*', '*teacher*', '*activity*', '*lesson plan*', etc. (Figure 5). Similarly, student A, B and C used the past tense to narrate the events as they happened in a previous experience, despite some mistakes and misuse of the tense on some occasions due to the language level (Table 3 & appendices).



**Figure 5: examples from different reflections of the focus group indicating the field of the situation.**

**Table 3: Excerpts from reflections on the good use of past tenses and some errors conducted.**

	Example of using past tenses in reflections	Examples of attempt to use the past tenses with errors
<b>Student A</b>	One of the special needs students joined the class. I was delighted with the way they treated her. The students were helping her and they were good. I felt happy when some of the students asked me to teach them, but told them that am not ready yet. "It's very important to know how to deal with students and their inappropriate behaviors". (Kelly, 2011) Reflection 1	at the back of the class for their activities. The teacher posts their drawings or anything done by them on this board. In addition, they have class rules area, numbers area, super kids area, and spelling princess area. Reflection 1
<b>Student B</b>	After teaching the lesson of verb to have and family tree I realized that I did all what I was included in my lesson plan. Even when the class took longer than what was expected, did not have to feel worried because I was already planned for an extra activity. Moreover, all the Reflection 7	In this lesson, I have taught the students spirit things, first of all I have taught them about sounds, then they have given me some example of the sounds, and in the last activity, they complete the sentences books with the correct word. The students were motivated with me, they Reflection 1
<b>Student C</b>	First of all, through the day and after the morning assembly, I was writing down what I have seen in the roles and responsibility of the teacher. I was attending with grade 12 art section. I found some of the students were talking while the tutor was explaining the lesson. Then the teacher Reflection 1	asks the students to come to correct their works (see figure 1). On the other period, she gives the students new concepts which was about the mean, median and the mode. In this class she didn't explain it for the students but it was answering the questions in their notes, so students were able to answer the questions then they finish the questions for this lesson (see f Reflection 2

Additionally, the writers used different adverbial phrases to direct the readers on 'when', 'how' and 'where' the teaching practice took place. For example, they used 'when', 'in the third week', 'at the end of the lesson' and 'after teaching the lesson'. The students represented 'where' using 'areas at the classroom', 'at school' and 'I divided the classroom'. Student C for example used sentences and phrases such as; 'the last activity I used was the riddle cards which contain the new words of the whole unit' and 'I was moving around the groups to see their work and to take some photos' to show 'how' things were done during the practicum (see appendices).

As previously mentioned, reflections were written to be read by people who could assess the writer, or by the writers themselves to assess their own teaching abilities. This was reflected through the opinions provided for future lessons, and the comments whether the lessons went well or not (Figure 6). Furthermore, the students included explanations to the readers of some aspects to make them clearer. For example, student C in her first reflection explained the reason for writing the reflection, which is 'in this task, I observe my mentor teacher for all of the day to take some notes about her roles and responsibilities in her teaching'.



Meanwhile, student A described the class of her mentor teacher aiming to make the readers imagine the situation. For instance, she wrote in her sixth reflection *‘my mentor teacher’s class was well organized and the classroom environment was supportive’*. Student B provided examples of how a warm up activity can be by saying *‘this warm up or activity for instance a video, game, active worksheet, story, role play or even a song would make the students more active and motivated in the classroom’*. The ‘mode’ of the reflections, was a text written by students for their bachelor degree in one of the educational institutions in the UAE. Hence, it was written for the purpose of task completion of their study requirements, so they got the combination of informal, personal and simple written pieces with occasional formality.

Student B	attention with me , they want to listen to me , to know how to answer the questions . I think I should have another strategy to make the students quite and to do not miss behave , this strategy should be different that the red points strategy . I believe that each teacher should have different strategy to
Student A	best. For the next lesson I’ll try to give the lower ability students hints which are clearer so they can work independently. As a result I’ll be able to give all the students my attention fairly. In addition, I wasn’t feeling well and I think that affected my classroom management little bit.
Student C	I should focus on asking the students about the meaning of the easiest word before the hardest word because if I ask the students I will help the students who do not know the meaning of the word to know the meaning and the students who know the meaning to share their knowledge with other students.

**Figure 6: Excerpts from students A’s, B’s and C’s reflections showing future recommendations and opinions.**

## 3.2. Grammatical & Lexical Cohesion

### 3.2.1. Grammatical Cohesion

With reference to the literature about the importance of the grammatical cohesion in reflections in particular and narrative history genre in general, the students A, B and C developed the use of suitable tense to enhance the cohesion of the text. They based the texts on the use of past tenses

either past simple tense as a part of the narrative genre, or the use of past continuous for example to talk about past routines occurred in schools in the discussed situation. Despite the use of past tenses, students sometimes included present or future tenses to mention a desire or a future decision in the upcoming lesson or plan (Table 3 and Figure 6).

Another key feature noticed in reflective journals, was the occurrence of conjunctive cohesion, which includes conjunctions and adverbials. Each student in the focus group used different conjunctions and developed further understanding of their use as they went through the levels (see appendices). Student B used '*moreover*' in reflection 4 to add further information regarding an event happened at the end of the practicum week (Figure 7). Meanwhile, student C included several conjunctions in the first reflection for different purposes (Figure 7). She used '*secondly*' to add a further incident at school which was followed by '*suddenly*' to indicate a sudden change in the event. Also used '*after that*' to follow the sequence of what she narrated. Similarly, she added a controversy in the event using '*however*' to indicate that the event changed into the opposite. In contrast, student A tended to use coordinating linking words like '*and*' and '*but*' more frequently in her reflection, and she used other conjunctions less frequently than other students. In spite of this, her reflection pieces still had a basic type of cohesion since the use of conjunctions were either subordinating or coordinating (see appendices). That development in the use of conjunctions showed that the students gained more language input, which led to further understanding on the use and functions of conjunctives within the genre.

Student B	during my reading . Moreover in the last day of this week all of the school were wearing their favorite character clothes and it was big competition for the best character .
Student C	<p>Secondly in the second class with the same class that was the 12 art 1.I was moving around the groups to see their work and to take some photos Suddenly the teacher asks her student to stop working and be ready to present their job. When the second group was presenting their work one student from the class was playing with the pen and she was distracting her friends, the tutor took her pen and through it in the bin. After that the teacher took this student and kept it separate from her group and she was still talking.</p> <p>However, the last class I attend it with my mentor teacher was the 12 science class section 1. The students were on time, and my instructor was explaining to them some grammar rules and gives them some examples to stick the lesson in their mind. While the teacher was teaching some of</p>

**Figure 7: Excerpts representing the use of conjunctions by student B and C.**

The existence of different types of references in the focus group's reflections were found to achieve further cohesion. First, the analysis of the texts revealed that the students used personal pronouns to refer to other participants in reflections and avoid repetition. This was clear through the use of anaphoric referencing using the 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronoun 'he', 'she', 'they' or 'it' (Table 4). To elaborate, student A in her level 4 reflection used the third person pronoun 'she' to refer to her *MST (Mentor School Teacher)* in the previous sentence. Student C used the pronoun 'it' to refer to the activity that the student wanted to choose. Similarly, student B used 'it' to refer to the noun 'language' in her level 6 reflection. Second, since the students A, B and C were narrating their own experience, they used the first person pronoun 'I' to refer to themselves as the main character in their own reflections (Table 4).

Third, the students used possessive pronouns for the purpose of possessive reference such as the third person possessive 'their'. For example, student A used 'their' in reflection 7 to refer to the class that she will be teaching. Also, student B used 'their' to refer to the students mentioned in reflection 4, which was also used by student C's reflection 2 for the same purpose (Table 4). Furthermore, the focus group used the object pronoun 'her' to refer to a singular character in the



story, as in student C's reflection 3 which was used as a reference to a girl in the class. The plural form '*them*' was used more often to refer to characters in the narrative history genre, which referred to the '*students*' in almost all the reflections. Additionally, student A used the reflective pronoun '*themselves*' to refer to the '*literacy class*' in reflection 7 as well as using '*myself*' to refer to herself in the same reflection. While student C used '*themselves*' to refer to '*one by one student*' and '*their friends*', student B didn't make use of reflexive pronouns in her texts. This is also applied to the use of the possessive (-s', -'s) to relate things to the nouns in the writing, and this was mostly found in student A's reflections.

**Table 4: Pronouns use in some reflections as anaphoric reference.**

Student A				
	Subject Pronoun	Object pronoun	Possessives	Reflexive pronouns
Reflection 4	I, She, They, It, You	Her, Them	My, Their	-
Reflection 6	I, She, They, It	Them	Their, his, my	-
Reflection 7	We, I, They, He, It	Them	Their, Its, My	Themselves, Myself
Student B				
	Subject Pronoun	Object pronoun	Possessives	Reflexive pronouns
Reflection 4	I, He, We, They, It	Us, Me, Them	His, My, Their	-
Reflection 5	I, You, He, They, It	Him, Me, Them	My	-
Reflection 7	I, They, It	Them, Me	Their, My	-
Student C				
	Subject Pronoun	Object pronoun	Possessives	Reflexive pronouns
Reflection 2	I, She, They, It	Me	Their, My	-
Reflection 3	I, It, They, We, She	Her, Me, Them	My, Their	Themselves
Reflection 5	I, She, They, It	Her, Them	Their, My	-
Reflection 6	I	Them, Me	Their, My	

In addition, the students used mostly the determiners '*this*', '*that*', '*those*' and '*these*' for referencing purposes, which in most occasions preceded the noun (see appendices & figure 8).

These determiners were mostly used by all students to refer to nouns such as ‘*class*’, ‘*lesson*’, ‘*strategy*’, ‘*student*’, and ‘*teaching practice*’ etc. Only student C ‘*those*’ when she quoted a sentence from a book where it was used to refer to ‘*teachers who did not have high quality relationships*’. ‘*That*’ was also mentioned in student C’s reflection 1 to point to ‘*warning for the second time*’, and also was used by student B in reflection 5 to refer to the sentence ‘*eyes on me*’. Student A used ‘*that*’ to point to ‘*a brilliant lesson plan*’ and ‘*preparing a great lesson*’ in reflection 3. This shows that the students understood that the reflective genre is related to their personal experience in practicum and employed the determiners to refer to the participants in the text.

Student C	<p>talk during the class time. The teacher warned them for the second time, but they ignored her. In <b>that</b> time, I was very surprised about the student’s behavior because they were respectful for their</p> <p>took her pen and through it in the bin. After that, the teacher took <b>this</b> student and kept it separate from her group and she was still talking.</p> <p>mentioned that “ teachers who had high-quality relationships with their students had fewer discipline problems and rule violations than <b>those</b> who did not have high-quality relationships”.</p>
Student A	<p>I agree with the statement which mentioned <b>that</b> a brilliant lesson plan is not enough and kids don’t always respond to adults. I think that preparing a great lesson is important to grab the students’ attention but <b>that’s</b> not enough to avoid misbehavior problems. Good management</p> <p>specific key areas. The purpose of <b>this</b> observation is to see literacy in action over the three week in this school. I tried to observe my SST during her English sessions in KG-2S class especially the</p>
Student B	<p>The students in <b>this</b> lesson were active and attractive , and when I were explain the lesson they were attention with me , they want to listen to me , to know how to answer the questions . I think I should</p> <p>Today my lesson plan was little bet different , in this lesson my students have describe the pictures and write a story of <b>these</b> pictures . This lesson was enjoyable to them , first I let them see the pictures, then</p> <p>lesson .All of my students were in control and I have manage them well by using dojo points and saying a sentence <b>that</b> all of them became quite which is Eyes on me then the students say</p>

**Figure 8: Excerpts representing the use of determiners in reflections.**

Another feature of grammatical cohesion was the use of ‘*article reference*’. Students used the definite article ‘*the*’ at several places in the text to refer back to something that was introduced

previously. Figure 9 shows that the students used ‘*the*’ mostly when talking about ‘*class*’, ‘*time*’, ‘*students*’, ‘*classroom*’, ‘*teacher*’, etc. (see appendices), which all were introduced previously in their reflections and were mentioned with the definite article ‘*the*’ since the reader was familiar with the concept. This demonstrates the students’ ability in relating ideas and showed links that were developed as they progressed.

<b>Student A</b>	played a game. I saw some amazing areas at the classroom. There was (new words) area near the board. They put all the new words there to remember them. Also, they have a large board at the back of <b>the class</b> for their activities. The teacher posts their drawings or anything done by them on this board. In addition, they have class rules area, numbers area, super kids area, and spelling princess area.
<b>Student B</b>	have another strategy to make the students quite and to do not miss behave , this strategy should be different that <b>the red</b> points strategy . I believe that each teacher should have different strategy to
<b>Student C</b>	Firstly, I observed the math teacher for two hours, to see what <b>the lesson</b> is today, so <b>the lesson</b> was full of concepts that students need to practice more and keep it in their mind. She did a lot of

**Figure 9: Excerpts showing the use of ‘the’ for referencing purposes.**

### 3.2.2. Lexical Cohesion

Regarding the lexical cohesion aspects found in the reflections, different items were noticed. The first key device was the use of ‘*word repetition*’ as part of tracking the readers’ attention along the reading, which was also mentioned as part of key topic vocabulary use. Repeating vocabulary as in Table 2 helped to tie the ideas in the reflections such as the repetition of the phrases and vocabulary like ‘*students’ learning*’ and ‘*teacher*’ (Figure 10). Student A repeated ‘*students’ learning*’ which was the focus of the teacher during that lesson.

Dhaher school, the classroom environment was really comfortable and well organized. It helps and supports the **students' learning**, and it affects them positively. For example, my mentor **teacher's** class was well organized and the classroom environment was supportive. The walls were full of pictures, words, labels, numbers and phrases which will support the **students' learning**. All the classes were provided with technology such as computers and data shows, to help them in making the lesson easier and to help all the **students** with different **learning** styles. The **teacher** tried to provide all the necessary tools for the **students** such as pencils, crayons, papers, and scissors. In addition, each **student** has his own white board and markers which will help them to solve problems in math and other lessons. Furthermore, the classroom

**Figure 10: Excerpt from student A's reflection 6 showing the repetition of lexical terms.**

Similarly, student B in her 8<sup>th</sup> reflection discussed the importance of the '*questioning technique*' in the classroom. Thus, she repeated words such as '*questions*', '*questioning techniques*', '*answers*' and '*guessing*', to keep the attention on the same topic being discussed (see appendices & Figure 11). A similar example is what student C discussed in her 1<sup>st</sup> reflection that she will observe her mentor teacher and consider her tasks and responsibilities. Therefore, '*role and responsibilities*' was repeated twice to emphasize the concept. Also, '*teachers*' and '*students*' were repeated a lot in the reflection to lead the narrative (see appendices and Figure 11). Student A repeated words such as '*misbehavior*', '*violently*', '*lesson plan*' and '*attention*' as well, to emphasize the importance of a lesson plan in controlling behavior. This shows that student A had a previous ability to tie the ideas together and link points through '*words repetition*', while the other two improved this as they progressed.

<p>I agree with the statement which mentioned that a brilliant <b>lesson plan</b> is not enough and kids don't always respond to adults. I think that preparing a great lesson is important to grab the students' <b>attention</b> but that's not enough to avoid <b>misbehavior</b> problems. Good management skills are important to control the classroom. Teachers should try to understand the students' behavior and the different types of <b>misbehavior</b> actions. That will help teachers to prevent <b>misbehavior</b> problems instead of dealing with the problem, and that will save their time (Yuan, 2012). Firstly, students may have home problems such as break up, parental control and punishment, which can affect them negatively, and cause them to misbehave to get the teacher's and other's <b>attention</b> (Burden, 2003). Secondly, children may be affected by some TV programs that show <b>violence</b>. In this case, having a great lesson plan will not be enough. The teacher should have good management skills to deal with the students who act <b>violently</b> and hurt others. Thirdly, the teacher should have a strong personality to deal with the students. The teacher's manner while teaching is as important as what she teaches. Of course teachers should have a good <b>lesson plan</b> but they should be confident and self-assured, because that will affect the students (Kyriacou, 2007). She should be able to use her eye to control the classroom and notice the students.</p>	<p>Roles and responsibilities of the teachers mean how the <b>teachers</b> are <b>managing</b> the class environment by control the students to have a great classroom <b>management</b>. In this task, I observe my mentor teacher for all of the day to take some notes about her <b>roles</b> and <b>responsibilities</b> in her teaching.</p> <p>First of all, through the day and after the morning assembly, I was writing down what I have seen in the <b>roles</b> and <b>responsibility</b> of the <b>teacher</b>. I was attending with grade 12 art section. I found some of the students were talking while the tutor was explaining the lesson. Then the teacher looked at the naughty students and separated them into other groups to stop talking, but return talk during the <b>class</b> time. The <b>teacher</b> warned them for the second time, but they ignored her. In that time, I was very surprised about the student's behavior because they were respectful for their teacher, friends and the class time.</p> <p>Secondly, in the second <b>class</b> with the same <b>class</b> that was the 12 art 1. I was moving around the groups to see their work and to take some photos. Suddenly, the <b>teacher</b> asks</p>
<p>Student A</p>	<p>Student C</p>
<p>needs or strengths in certain areas? How do you promote students' reflection and critical thinking? The <b>questioning technique</b> helped me to cover these elements effectively in my teaching. Through this week, I focused on this <b>technique</b> in my lessons. So what I noticed that the <b>questioning</b> in an interactive way in the lesson encouraged the students to think more deeply about information that they have given. So in the previous teaching lesson and from my observations in other subjects, I observed that most of the students were just <b>guessing</b> the <b>answers</b> rather than thinking about it. So during this week whenever I was expect <b>answers</b> I was always reminding them to think more about the answer, not just <b>guessing</b>. So I got what I expected from them and they started to give more critical <b>answers</b>. Moreover, I used <b>questioning technique</b> to guide students through new lesson content, making <b>connections</b> with previous learning and with the students' background knowledge. So that</p>	<p>Student B</p>

**Figure 11: Excerpts representing words repetition used the participants.**

Linked to this point, the students used another feature of lexical cohesion which were the synonyms. It is true that the amount of repetition exceeded the number of synonyms in the text, but still some synonyms existed within some reflections of each student. Student C used '*students*' rather than saying '*boys and girls*'. She also used synonyms of '*teacher*' in the same reflection like, '*tutor*' and '*instructor*'. Another use of synonyms was in student's A reflection 1 when she wrote '*happy - delighted*' in the same text, and she used in reflection level 3 synonyms such as '*misbehavior problems - misbehavior actions*', '*confident - self-assured*' and '*kids - students - children*' which showed a variation in using different terms that meant the same (Tables 5, 6 & 7). Student B as shown below used synonyms in reflection 5 such as '*involve - engage*' and '*kids - students*'. However, she had an error at the end of reflection 5 of using the synonyms '*in my*



*opinion*’ and *I think*’ as a one whole phrase at the beginning of the sentence “*so in my opinion I think my ...*” (see appendices). Considering these data and IELTS preparation course materials, the use of synonyms shows the students’ attempts to use a range of vocabulary which can be due to the raised awareness in language knowledge.

**Table 5: Examples of synonyms, antonyms and collocations in students A’s reflections.**

Focus group	Reflections	Synonyms	Antonyms	Collocations
Student A	Reflection 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student – kids</li> <li>Delighted – happy</li> </ul>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Built a good relationship</li> <li>Played a game</li> <li>Special need students</li> <li>Inappropriate behavior</li> <li>Every week</li> <li>Teaching practice</li> <li>In my opinion,</li> </ul>
	Reflection 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning – preparation</li> <li>Managing – organizing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Starts – ends</li> <li>Put – remove</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lesson preparation</li> </ul>
	Reflection 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kids – students – children</li> <li>Misbehavior problems – misbehavior actions</li> <li>Confident – self-assured</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kids – adults</li> <li>Control the classroom – good management skills</li> <li>Effectively – negatively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lesson plan</li> <li>Strong personality</li> <li>Eye contact</li> </ul>
	Reflection 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Language skills – reading, writing and listening</li> <li>Observe – see</li> <li>Children – students</li> </ul>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good idea</li> <li>Paying attention</li> <li>Teaching strategies</li> <li>Interested in</li> </ul>
	Reflection 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Care – raising</li> <li>Encourage – reinforcement</li> </ul>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching practice</li> <li>Different things</li> <li>Break time</li> </ul>
	Reflection 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps – supports</li> </ul>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom environment</li> <li>Have fun</li> </ul>
	Reflection 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literacy – read and write</li> <li>Helping – scaffold</li> <li>Helping – assisting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Themselves – myself</li> <li>Boys – girls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Language skills</li> <li>Enough time</li> <li>Calm down</li> <li>Went back</li> <li>It would be better if ...</li> </ul>
	Reflection 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A gap in the wires – circuit was broken</li> <li>Showed – presented</li> <li>Simple – easy</li> <li>Students – children</li> <li>Experiencing – exploring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher ability – lower ability</li> <li>Together – one student</li> <li>Wasn’t damaged – was damaged</li> <li>Circuit was broken – circuit must be connected</li> <li>Damaged – normal one</li> <li>Damaged – fixed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grab attention</li> <li>At the beginning</li> <li>Building knowledge</li> <li>Faced problems</li> <li>Discussed together</li> </ul>

**Table 6: Examples of synonyms, antonyms and collocations in students B's reflections.**

Focus group	Reflections	Synonyms	Antonyms	Collocations
<b>Student B</b>	<i>Reflection 1</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Motivated – active and attractive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Misbehave – managing the students</li> <li>Correct – wrong</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Answer the question</li> <li>In the right way</li> </ul>
	<i>Reflection 2</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage – active and motivated</li> </ul>	-	-
	<i>Reflection 3</i>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each student – everyone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lesson plan</li> <li>Move around</li> </ul>
	<i>Reflection 4</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moreover – in addition, ..</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Polite – don't be angry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching practice</li> </ul>
	<i>Reflection 5</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involve – engage</li> <li>In control – manage</li> <li>In my opinion – I think</li> <li>Kids – students</li> <li>I believe – in my opinion</li> </ul>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In my opinion, ....</li> <li>Eyes on me</li> </ul>
	<i>Reflection 6</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I think – I believe</li> <li>Control – manage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whole class – individual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Light energy</li> <li>At the end of</li> <li>In the next day</li> </ul>
	<i>Reflection 7</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practical – suitable</li> <li>Presented – talked about</li> <li>Students – learners</li> <li>Scaffolding – support</li> </ul>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family tree</li> <li>Lesson plan</li> <li>Feel worried</li> <li>Teaching goal</li> </ul>
	<i>Reflection 8</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote – encourage</li> <li>Speak up – talk – share ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confidence – low self-esteem</li> <li>Guessing answers – thinking about it</li> <li>Guessing – critical answers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Already know</li> <li>Critical thinking</li> <li>Background knowledge</li> <li>Questioning technique</li> <li>Lesson planning</li> <li>Thinking about it</li> </ul>

**Table 7: Examples of synonyms, antonyms and collocations in students C's reflections.**

Focus group	Reflections	Synonyms	Antonyms	Collocations
<b>Student C</b>	<i>Reflection 1</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roles – responsibilities</li> <li>Managing – control</li> <li>Grade 12 art section – students</li> <li>Grade 12 science section – students</li> <li>Teacher – tutor – instructor</li> <li>Job – work</li> <li>Delighted – happy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Naughty students – respectful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom management</li> <li>Morning assembly</li> <li>First of all</li> <li>Naughty students</li> <li>Class time</li> <li>Second time</li> <li>Bad mood</li> <li>Good mood</li> </ul>
	<i>Reflection 2</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners – students</li> <li>To learn student – teaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hard – easy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching practice</li> <li>Have fun</li> </ul>
	<i>Reflection 3</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A good relation – high-quality relationship</li> <li>Problems – rule violations</li> <li>Class – lesson</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Past – present</li> <li>Laugh – upset</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working together</li> <li>In my point of view</li> <li>Classroom management</li> <li>Overall aim</li> </ul>
	<i>Reflection 4</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback – recommendations</li> <li>Students – body and girls</li> <li>Appropriate – suitable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boys – girls</li> <li>Challenging – appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching practice</li> <li>Classroom rules</li> <li>Overall aim</li> </ul>
	<i>Reflection 5</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Went well – went good</li> <li>Three levels – low, middle and high</li> <li>Students – boys and girls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low – middle – high levels</li> <li>Boy – girls</li> <li>Confused – get the idea</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher assistant</li> <li>Moving around</li> <li>In the future,</li> <li>Class time</li> </ul>
	<i>Reflection 6</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners – students</li> <li>Work more – work hard</li> </ul>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lesson plan</li> <li>Do my best</li> </ul>
	<i>Reflection 7</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vocabulary – new words</li> <li>Work effectively – wholly involved</li> <li>Remember words – consolidate meanings of vocabulary words</li> </ul>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New words</li> <li>Correct answers</li> <li>To conclude</li> </ul>

Students appeared to use the antonyms to show contradictory ideas under similar topics (Tables 5, 6 & 7). For instance, student A in reflection 3 mentioned the following antonyms: '*kids – adults*' and '*negatively – effectively*' to indicate to classroom management strategies and their effectiveness. As shown in Table 5, student A used '*higher ability students – lower ability students*' to show the differences between the levels, '*together – one student*' to demonstrate the differences in interaction patterns in class, '*damaged – fixed*' and '*the circuit was broken – the circuit must be connected*' to show how she explained and helped the students in the exploration to discover differences. There were more effective use of antonyms in student A's reflection 8, which really added a different type of link between the ideas discussed when she taught a science lesson. Conversely, both students B and C used less antonyms than student A. Student B used antonyms in the first and last reflections such as '*confident – low self-esteem*', '*correct – wrong*' and '*critical answer – guessing*', and student C used three antonyms in reflection 5 as the highest number among reflections, but in the last two reflections she did not use any.

This analysis shows also the use of collocations as another device to increase the text cohesion and make the written piece more predictable. All the students tended to use similar collocations related to the topic vocabulary. These are demonstrated below in Tables 5, 6 & 7. They were '*language skills*', '*teaching strategies*', '*paying attention*', '*class time*', '*checking understanding*' and a '*teacher assistant*'. It appeared that use of collocations in the reflections increased accordingly depending on the topic discussed and as students progressed. To elaborate, the increase occurred when the students reflected on their teaching experiences rather than when they observed for a task to be completed as part of the practicum requirement. For example, student A in reflection 4, 1, 7 and 8 used more collocations as she talked about own experience in teaching and working in



schools, while in reflections 2 and 3 she narrated observation experiences and was instructed to write about topics such as '*observing the school mentor*' and '*the importance of planning*' (see appendices). Student B also had a similar example of using less collocations in reflections 1, 2, 3 and 4 as they were related to observation tasks and short teaching lessons as a novice teacher. Conversely, in reflections 7 and 8 student B used collocations such '*lesson plan*', '*teaching goal*', '*family tree*', '*questioning technique*' and '*background knowledge*'. Student C however was a different case, which could be related to her writing ability. Even though reflection 1 was written based on an observation task, she narrated the events more than the other students (see appendices student C reflection 1), so she used '*classroom management*', '*morning assembly*', '*bad mood*', '*good mood*' and '*class time*'.

The use of word sets in reflections was the most notable feature of lexical cohesion in students' texts. The students used words in terms of '*whole*' and '*part*' indicate to parts of the lesson or the practicum as a whole term (see appendices). Student C mentioned the '*very hungry caterpillar lesson*' as the whole term and other related terms which are; '*aim*', '*different activities*', '*matching worksheet*' and '*feedback*'. Student A mentioned the '*science lesson plan*' as a whole term and the other sub-terms are; '*engagement stage*', '*building knowledge stage*', '*transition stage*', '*worksheet*', '*played a game*', and '*exploring*'. Similarly to student B in reflection 8 employed '*questioning techniques*' as the whole term, while '*guessing*', '*critical answers*', '*thinking*', '*expect answers*' and '*students' background knowledge*' were the parts. This shows that the students developed an understanding of reflective genre different purposes and what can support the understanding of the reader through the lexical cohesion. That improvement can probably be related to the input gained in education classes or IELTS preparation courses.

### 3.3. Texts Organization and Coherence

Regarding the organization and coherence of the focus groups' reflections, examining the students' reflective journals and artefacts of IETLS preparation materials, the students followed the narrative text organization. Students started with an '*orientation*' paragraph that identified the writer's intention and an introductory statement to ignite imagination of what is to be narrated. Then, the students had the '*complications*' paragraph/s with the series of narrated events where some issues might arise. Finally the students ended with the '*resolution*' or conclusion statement including future recommendation or whether the issue was resolved (see appendices). However, the organizations of some texts contained some errors such as not leaving spaces between the paragraphs, which therefore impacted coherence. As shown in the appendices of student C, all of her reflections easily identified separate paragraphs with each element of the narrative history organization. This appears to identify what the writer intended to present clearly and communicate the purpose of writing the reflections easily. For example, student's C reflection 1, started by introducing the general topic of the reflection which was "*Roles and responsibilities of the teachers mean...*", and ended with the statement that presented the intention of the writing "*In this task, I observe my mentor...*" (see appendices). Figure 12 presents examples of statements selected from student C's reflections to clearly present the purpose of each text which enhance the coherence. Student C thereby developed an understanding of the text and genre structure which can be related to previous input gained related to writing.

<b>Reflection 1</b>	environment by control the students to have a great classroom management. In this task, I observe my mentor teacher for all of the day to take some notes about her roles and responsibilities in her teaching.
<b>Reflection 2</b>	Roles and responsibilities of the teachers mean how the teachers are managing the class environment by control the students to have a great classroom management. In this task, I observe my mentor teacher for all of the day to take some notes about her roles and responsibilities in her teaching.
<b>Reflection 3</b>	This lesson is the second lesson that I will teach it for grade five girl's students. Students will revise the grammar skills which are the past and present tense in the story " <u>My</u> trip to Cartagena" through forty-five minutes. The overall aim of this lesson is to revise some of the grammar skills and differentiate between how the words change from the present to the past and the opposite.
<b>Reflection 4</b>	This lesson was my first lesson in my teaching practice at RAK Academy School. The lesson was for foundation stage two students. They are ten boys and thirteen girls. It was on November 7, 2016. The lesson was a reading lesson about " The Very Hungry Caterpillar" lesson for twenty five minutes.

**Figure 12: Excerpts from student C's reflections showing the good identification of the writing purpose.**

Student A's reflections showed improvements in writing clear statements in the orientation part, but the organization was still affected by the misuse of correct spacing between paragraphs and punctuation, as most of them were written as a whole one block (see appendices). Perhaps student A didn't think of the reader as much as thinking about mirroring her own experiences to reflect on, and thought that she would be the one who will read these reflections. This presents the difference between reflective and IELTS writing, that writers in reflections would narrate the experience without having the restrictions of IELTS genre writing. In spite of this, student A clarified the purpose of writing each reflection in the '*orientation*' section, which increased the coherence of the text. The purposes of the reflections as appeared in the analysis, from the first reflection to the last were; the experiences in the third week, previous experience at a primary school, classroom management, literacy in action observation task implementation within three weeks, school environment impact on students, reflecting the whole experience in the second week at a primary

government school, literacy class teaching experience, and finally teaching a science class (see appendices).

Student B had a similar case of developing the coherence and organization of reflections, which were affected by the punctuation errors and the use of paragraphing (see appendices). What was notable is that student B wasn't able to identify a specific purpose of writing reflections in reflection 1 and 2, as the texts represented different ideas at once and reflected on general concepts. Later in the other reflections, the purpose of each reflection started to appear clearly. For example, reflection 3 narrated a lesson plan, a teaching practicum at a private school in reflection 4, a math lesson experience in reflection 5, a science lesson in the sixth one, an experience in teaching the family tree lesson and questioning techniques in the last one. This shows that student B's coherence was affected by the input gained through the levels that improved her writing, where the IELTS score or preparation course may contributed in building the coherence of her writing.

Further consideration of the narrative history genre coherence is that it increased in the complication or the body paragraph. This was clear through the enhanced clarity of the sequenced ideas, images created in the mind while reading some descriptive words to describe incidents and events that happened within the lesson. The students narrated their events as they progressed and described their lessons, and they tended to explain locations, feelings, sequences and flow of the lesson (see appendices and refer to the cohesion section). Writers on several occasions mentioned a complication or issues to be solved. The resolution of these complications appeared in the concluding the statement or paragraph, either the form of recommendation or suggestions for future development. A good example on this was noted in student A's reflection 8 identifying the statement *"I think that I should still work on my management skills because the students were very*

*excited and they were hyper...*”, which was written as a recommendation and led to increase the coherence through understanding the intention of the writer. Student B also commented on the ‘*Art class*’ that was noisy in reflection 1. She mentioned it in the body paragraph and again in the conclusion as the writer was not satisfied about what happened (see appendices). Student B also commented on a classroom management strategy and suggested a resolution to improve classroom management in reflection 1 (see appendices).

### **3.4. IELTS Band and Students’ Reflective Journals Writing**

To investigate the IELTS band correlation with students’ reflections, the analysis of the discourse done in the previous sections will be taken into consideration. This will also be supported by the IELTS band descriptors used to assess IELTS, reflections assessment criteria used in education and students bands gained when entered and to exit the B.Ed. degree.

#### **3.4.1. Student A**

Regarding student A’s reflections, her performances were consistent and increased slightly as she progressed throughout the education years. This was evident when considering both IELTS and education reflective writing criteria. The student gained the overall band of 5.5 in IELTS when entered the program without knowing her writing band. When considering the education criteria her first, second and third reflections were similar in terms of clarity which was within the range of A and B grades. This means that the student was able to express ideas with consistent accuracy and few errors. Similarly, the organization of the text fell between the B and C grades of having general clear points organized logically despite minor shortfalls in punctuation or text design (see appendices).

The consideration of the IELTS criteria revealed, the student A's first three reflections lied in the category of band 6 – 6.5 in achieving the task purpose, presenting the main ideas and position of discussion. The coherence of the task was maintained within the range of 5.5 – 6, where student A narrated the ideas sequentially and used coordinating linkers (see grammatical cohesion section). This was evident through student A's answer in the interview, when described how her journal improved through the study levels, she mentioned that the journal started as descriptive and then she learned how to be more critical (interview question 7 in appendices). In spite of that, further linking cohesive devices and logical ordering of ideas were recommended. Both grammatical and lexical resources ranged between bands 6-7, as the students employed well a variety of lexical items and grammatical aspects. Even though the student misused the accurate tense on occasions, she still had continuous consistency in verb tense agreement (Figure 13 and appendices).

Regarding the IELTS reports in the appendices, student A received band 6.5 when she reached level 6 in education as an exit score to graduate. As mentioned, that the difference in the writing performance changed slightly compared to the previous levels, as there were some improvements in the way of discussing the points, presenting students' learning, coherence and cohesion of the text. Based on the analysis, student A's level in writing was higher than her actual second IELTS score when considering the IELTS band descriptor provided in the appendices. According to question 3 in the interview, student A responded that taking the IELTS test did not affect her English skills (see appendices). In addition, student A responded to questions 1 and 2 in the interview about the effectiveness of the IELTS that there were some external factors that affected the actual performance of the student. Thus, from her own point of view the IELTS score may not reflect accurately the actual level in the target English skills (Figure 13).

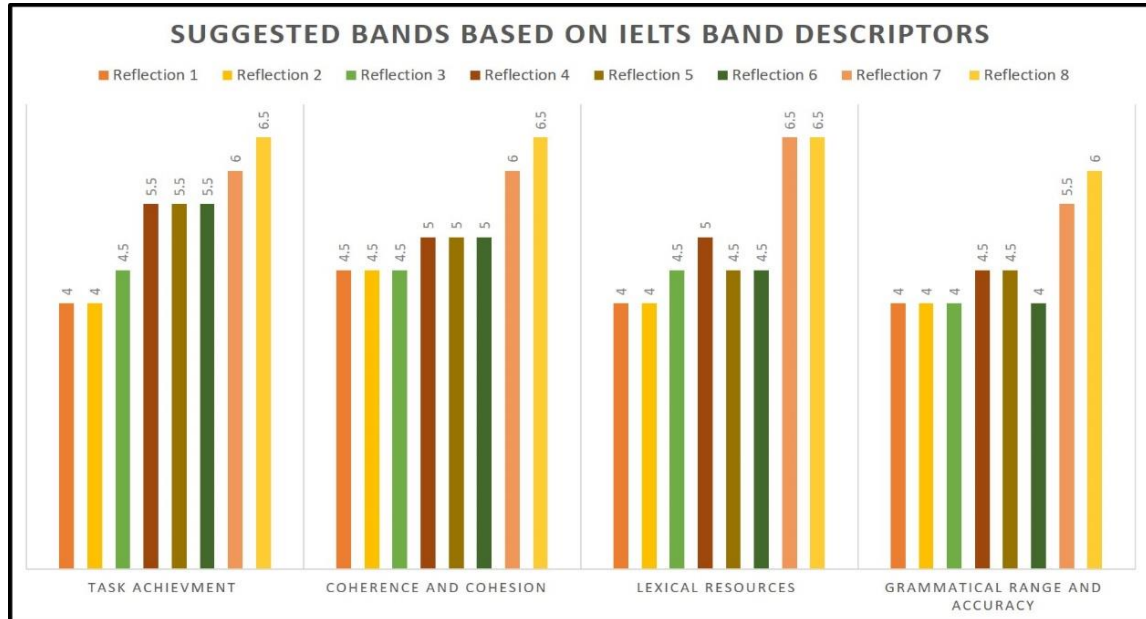
<p><b>1. How do you feel about the International Testing Language System (IELTS)?</b></p> <p>It's a good tool to measure students' speaking, listening, writing and reading skills. However, there are many external factors that could affect the students' score, which might reduce its reliability.</p> <p><b>2. Do you think IELTS test is an effective tool to measure students' performances in English? To what extent?</b></p> <p>I'd score its effectiveness 6/10. It might be effective in giving us a general idea about the student's level in English. However, at that exact time, many factors could affect the score. The student might be ill or nervous, which doesn't give a very reliable result.</p>
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*Figure 13: Student A's response to questions 1 and 2 in the interview.*

### 3.4.2. Student B

Student B's case in the analysis differed from student A's, which showed that there was a notable difference in both the IELTS bands, suggested scores assigned when considering the IELTS descriptors and reflections criteria (Figure 14 & appendices). When student B first joined the education program, she received band 5.5 in writing and a similar band for the overall score. Yet, as shown in the following Figure 14 that considering the descriptors to identify a suitable grade for her reflective writing provided a lower suggested score than the one given in IELTS. The bar chart demonstrates that student B in her first three reflections were given the scores of around 4 – 4.5, which considered lower than the following years (Figure 14). This shows that the student wasn't quite familiar with the task concept, unable to tie the ideas together coherently, and lacking in the variety of lexis and the range of grammatical resources. This also matches the criteria followed in education to assess reflections, which shows that these reflections can be at the C – D grades in the clarity and task organization (see appendices). As the student progressed through the levels, she improved in reflections 4, 5, and 6 in understanding the purpose of the task and combining the ideas together. Still, she was not able to improve both grammar and vocabulary use and as the

descriptors provided that she can be categorized in band 4.5, while it increased to band 5 in the other two categories (see appendices).



**Figure 14: A bar chart representing the suggested IELTS scores given to student B by the researcher based on IELTS band descriptors.**

According to the second IELTS report of receiving 5.5 in writing in the last two levels, as well as the other evidences from the interview questions, education criteria and IELTS band descriptor, which support the results of having a dramatic change in writing reflections 7 and 8. Therefore, student B mentioned that her level changed and improved after taking the IELTS and gained band 6 to exit the program (interview question 3 in appendices). Furthermore, the education criteria and the band descriptors agreed that student B was able to communicate the purpose of reflections writing, link the ideas, reflect on own ability and students' learning (Table 8). The student was also able to use variety of high level vocabulary, write grammatically cohesive sentences with fewer errors noted as represented in the descriptors (Figure 14). This was also mentioned in the fourth interview question about the challenges faced in writing journals. Student B replied that grammar



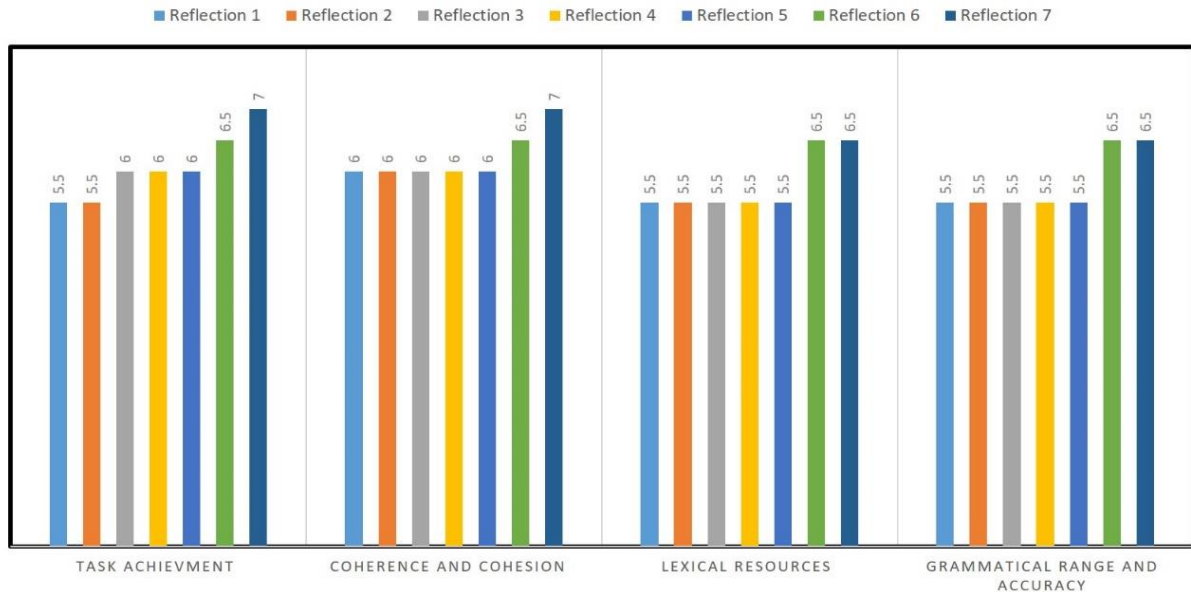
mistakes were considered a challenge but she overcame the issue when she developed the language (see appendices). It appears that the time, course input and skills practice for IELTS had a major effect on student B's reflective writing development.

**Table 8: Suggested grades based on the education reflective writing criteria given to student B by the researcher.**

	Reflection 1	Reflection 2	Reflection 3	Reflection 4	Reflection 5	Reflection 6	Reflection 7	Reflection 8
Clarity & Accuracy	D	D	C	C	C	C	B	A
Organization	D	D	C	B	D	C	B	A
Reflection on Practice 1	C	C	C	B	C	C	B	A
Reflection on Practice 2	D	D	D	C	B	B	A	A
Reflection on Practice 3	D	D	B	C	B	C	A	A

### 3.4.3. Student C

#### SUGGESTED BANDS BASED ON IELTS BAND DESCRIPTORS



**Figure 15: A bar chart representing the suggested IELTS scores given to student C by the researcher based on IELTS band descriptors.**

**Table 9: Suggested grades based on the education reflective writing criteria given to student C by the researcher.**

	Reflection 1	Reflection 2	Reflection 3	Reflection 4	Reflection 5	Reflection 6	Reflection 7
Clarity & Accuracy	C	C	C	B	B	A	A
Organization	B	B	B	B	A	A	A
Reflection on Practice 1	B	C	B	B	B	A	A
Reflection on Practice 2	C	C	B	A	C	A	A
Reflection on Practice 3	C	C	B	B	C	A	A

With regard to students C's writing, she had a similar consistency in the level to student A. As shown in Figure 15 that in the IELTS band descriptor her level varied between 5.5 and 6 starting from reflection 1 up to the fifth one. This also agrees with the education department criteria of assessing reflections (Figure 15 & Table 9). It appears that student C's language level was already at a good stage which also matched student C's first writing IELTS score of 5.5. Student C also demonstrated an understanding of the task through reflecting on her ability and observed teaching experience as well as her students' learning. In addition, the task organization was well comprehended despite minor errors in the punctuation. This agrees with the IELTS grading descriptor of having a coherent text that narrated the purpose of writing reflections clearly following the writer's line of thought (Figure 15, Table 9 & appendices). Simultaneously, student C declared in the interview that one of the major challenges faced in writing reflections was in the correct use of grammatical aspects and lexical elements. This agrees with the analysis of the texts using the criteria sheets as shown in the table above and Figure 15.

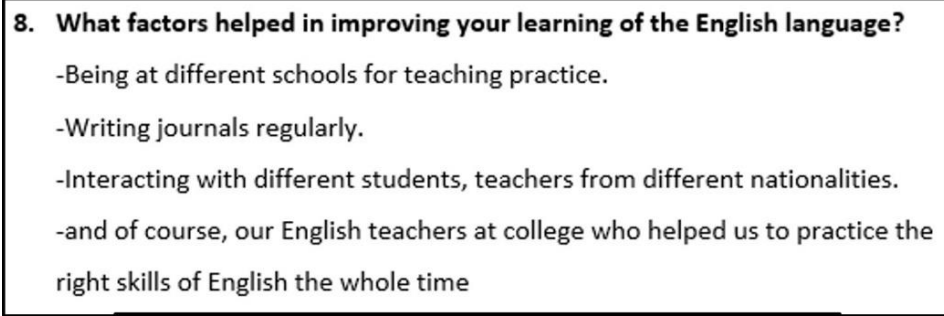
After taking the second IELTS exam for the graduation process, student C's level improved as shown in the IELTS report of getting band 6 in writing (see appendices). This was also stated by student C in interview question 3 that her English has improved since she joined the education department (see appendices). Aspects such as grammar use and effective use of lexical resources increased, led to improvements in the communication of the task purpose and reflective discussion (Figure 15 & Table 9).

### **3.5. IELTS Preparation Courses and Students' Reflective Journals**

#### **Writing**

This part of the data analysis will examine whether IELTS preparation courses affected the development of students' writing performance in IELTS, and therefore affected the students' writing skills in reflections respectively. That identification will require looking at students' interview responses, scores in IELTS reports, discourse analysis of section 2.3. and samples of materials used in preparation courses to improve language skills.

Student A's response to question 7 in the interview was that she didn't take any preparation courses, and only her study through college levels led to the development of her writing skills (see appendices). Other evidences in her response was explained in the previous section of having a good performance throughout her reflections, as well as the slight improvement in the writing aspects based on education and IELTS criteria. In addition, the score achieved in the final report and what she mentioned about having 5.5 as a previous score, student A stated that there were other factors that led her to enhance her language skills other than taking preparation courses in IELTS (Figure 16). These factors were all related to the experiences she passed through and the surrounding environment that shaped her learning as an EFL student.



*Figure 16: Excerpt from student A's interview question no.8.*

In contrast, both students B and C took the preparation courses to improve their language skills and prepare for taking the IELTS test, which both declared in the interview question 8 (Figure 17). Student C's level was similar to student A's case, and she mentioned benefiting a lot from the courses taken at the college to enhance English skills. In fact, student C's score taken in 2014 was 5.5 and this increased in 2017 to 6 in writing and the overall band, which could be considered as a benefit of taking the additional preparations for IELTS. Another point mentioned by student C is that checking drafts, getting feedback and searching for topics helped to raise the understanding of language accuracy and using vocabulary to support the genre of the text. Student C's research may have helped her learn words and unconsciously led her to raise the awareness that each genre requires a specific register, which also increased her understanding about the different intentions of different genres. Based on the analysis of the previous sections, both students developed the use of conjunctions needed for reflections as a narrative history genre. This was noted through the course materials used, such as teaching students how to write academic writing (see appendices). To elaborate more, the students were exposed to punctuation practices in order to improve the writing of coherent texts, which is reflected in student B's work. After taking the preparation courses her writing of reflections changed in terms of improving the use of punctuations, which made her writing more comprehensible (see appendices, Sections 4.2 & 4.1.2).

<p><b>What factors helped in improving your learning of the English language?</b> There are lots of factors helped me to improve my English such as;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reading stories then summarize them in English.</li> <li>2. Watching English movies without subtitles.</li> <li>3. Communicate with people using English language.</li> <li>4. Translating Arabic sentences into English.</li> <li>5. My teachers support at the school.</li> <li>6. My family support.</li> <li>7. Listening to the pronunciation of the hard words and repeat them.</li> <li>8. Joining the English council since I was at the school.</li> <li>9. Teaching my little brothers at home.</li> <li>10. Joining Higher College of Technology.</li> <li>11. IELTS test and the preparation for it.</li> <li>12. Practicing talking in English in front of the mirror.</li> </ol>	<p><b>8. What factors helped in improving your learning of the English language?</b></p> <p>I had improve my English language because of several factors which are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. IELTS classes</li> <li>2. Youtube Channels</li> <li>3. IELTS' Website Practices</li> <li>4. Education program classes each semester.</li> </ol>
<p>13. Writing essays and reports.</p> <p>14. Doing presentations in English.</p> <p>15. Teaching practice at different government and private schools.</p>	<p><b>Student B</b></p>

**Figure 17: Excerpt from students B's and C's interview question no.8.**

Teaching students the different types of genres that usually exist in IELTS writing tasks, helped students B and C understand the differences further. This appeared through increasing the amount of opinions in reflections and recommendations, particularly when they taught their own lessons (see appendices). According to student B, taking the IELTS classes, IELTS web site practices and going through the education classes helped to enhance her level in English. This impacted her writing and understanding of sentence formation, which was considered a major issue in her reflections 1 to 5. Student B improved writing sentences with additional cohesion, improved her grammar and vocabulary terms to support the context (see appendices). She declared that the education classes impacted her development of English skills besides taking the IELTS lessons thereby IELTS was not the main factor of her development (Figure 17). Student C added further aspects that led to the growth of her language level such as reading stories, watching English movies, communicating with other people, etc. (Figure 17).

## **Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations**

### **Introduction**

This section presents the findings identified from the previous chapter along with the discussion. The research conclusion, recommendations and limitations will also be included as part of this chapter.

### **5.1. Discussion**

The qualitative data will be discussed to answer the stated research focus questions. For this purpose, students' reflections from different education levels, IELTS reports, preparation courses materials and students' interviews will be examined to answer the research questions and hypothesis. Based on the hypothesis that students with prior preparations to IELTS could perform better in writing reflections, and their differences in IELTS bands could correlates with the achievement in writing reflections, are considered in the examination to identify the results.

#### **5.1.1. IELTS Band Correlation to Reflective Writing**

The data revealed different results related to the correlation of the IELTS band and students' writing of reflections. The first result found is that the IELTS band cannot reflect all the students' actual language ability accurately (Ata 2015; Freimuth 2014). For example, some students were recognized at a higher level and already possessed a good performance in writing reflections, as in the case of student A. The reason is that the student developed an understanding of writing the genre of reflections categorized as a narrative history genre (Derewianka 2000; McGuire et al. 2009). In addition, the students developed a sense of writing the narrative history type of genres, which may be due to the development of writing skills and language level as they progressed

(Harmer 2001). The reason for this is the efficiency in using the topic vocabulary and genre register which adding clarity to the content being discussed (Quirke et al. 2009). Yet, this cannot guarantee the students' successful understanding of the genre, but rather can represent the understanding of writing reflections due to course requirements, or being trained to write such texts (Lightbown & Spada 2013; Wingate & Tribble 2012). Therefore, the students with high language ability can be expected to have a wide range of vocabulary, which can be employed to support the text register and enhance the clarity of the genre (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010). This is also leads to representing the social context and the purpose of writing reflective journals through the presentation of terms that identifies the narration, as well as providing critical opinions to mirror the teaching experiences and recommend further improvements in learning and teaching (Bawarshi and Reiff 2010; Lukin et al. 2011). Moreover, based on the interview answers and the previous analysis, students A and B who are already had a very good language skills that didn't correlate to the IELTS test band. This is related to having strong foundations in learning English either in schools or when entering the college. Taking the IELTS test for some students with good language skills was only considered a requirement in the field of study completion (El Massah & Fadly 2017; Freimuth 2014) rather than a way to improve their English, which shows a weakness in IELTS as a testing tool.

In contrast, as demonstrated in student B's case, her language ability was lower than the received IELTS band when she joined the education program. Hence, that low language ability was shown in writing reflective journals with less coherence, and grammatical and lexical cohesion. Perhaps the reason for having an IELTS band that is higher than the actual language skills, could be due to being trained to answer the questions and practiced how to deal with IELTS test types (Hughes 2003; Mahlberg 2006; Panahi & Mohammaditabar 2015). However, reflective journals writing

proven that free writing strategies showed students' actual abilities in understanding and presenting writing aspects. This also can affect the written genre comprehension and the ability of presenting the purpose of the text, which can be the result of having a range of grammatical resources and vocabulary (Cameron 2001; Leech et al. 2001).

The second result identified is that IELTS band can still demonstrate a change in some students' language performance, even if that change is considered as a slight difference from the actual English language ability (Gitsaki et al. 2014; Raven 2011). The representation of the IELTS band can be shown either as the student's recent performance or a development in the English language skills. The findings showed that student C's writing performance of reflections which also matched the IELTS writing of 5.5, as well as student B's language development in the final reflections, which is different that student A's situation (Brown 2007; Spencer 2009). Regarding student C's situation, Perhaps when she firstly joined the education program at the university her language level existed at the same range of the IELTS band, presented through her understanding of not only the IELTS writing genres but also her reflections (Asador et.al 2016; Wilson 2016). However, with student B's case and due to the development of language happening at the end of her education years, the IELTS band was able to describe the language learning level which matches the analysis of the reflections done in the previous section. Therefore, a further result can be gained that the change in student B's level was due to taking preparation courses to improve her language, which was also stated in the interviews questions (Hughes 2003; Panahi & Mohammaditabar 2015). This led to raising the student's understanding of writing reflections, learning how to represent a tied coherent genre through using a text register, developing the use of punctuations and providing a line of connected thoughts using the grammatical cohesion (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010; Harmer 2004;



Lukin et al. 2011). On the side of reflective writing, the student was able to present opinions on own teaching, critically think about issues and identify solutions, as well as judging the classroom experience (McGuire et al. 2009). Similarly, student C shared the same opinion about taking the IELTS band and preparation courses, showed similarity between the evaluation of her reflections and the match with her second score.

### **5.1.2. IELTS Preparation Course Impacts on Reflective Writing**

The third result, that IELTS preparation courses play a significant role in enhancing the writing skills and language in general for both students B and C, which in turn impacted the writing of reflections (Hughes 2003; Moore & Morton 2005). As a reason for that is the exposure to different tips and practices during the preparation class to learn the language effectively. This also enlarges the picture of viewing writing of more than just scripting, but rather as constructing discussions within coherent written pieces, and becoming more critical and analytical in presenting ideas using the language (Emmitt et al. 2003; Hughes 2003; Spencer 2009). Another benefit of taking preparation courses, is increasing confidence which was also presented through the writing flow of the text and ideas (Slavin 2014; Vialle et al. 2008). It seems that preparation courses gave both students B's and C's the ability to write confidently, which impacted the writing of reflections through presenting opinions, anticipating reasons and constructing discussions (Hyland 2007; Slavin 2014). In addition, the students were able to employ further lexical terms and grammatical resources such as conjunctions, subject-verb agreement, correct tenses and other grammatical aspects to support the cohesion (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010). Another benefit of these course noted is the consolidation of text organization, building sentences and effective punctuation leading to writing coherent reflections in the later levels after taking the IELTS test (Derewianka 2000;

Wingate & Tribble 2012). A further benefit is that the students' exposure to different genres as preparation course materials showed, enabled them to understand further how to follow the narrative history genre text construction. This built the ability to provide the needed information through the use of grammatical and lexical cohesions mentioned in the above section. Similarly, the students developed a sense of writing well-structured texts identifying the introductory statements, body paragraphs and concluding sentences (Derewianka 2000; Wilson 2016).

Nevertheless, since the students were joining the education program where all courses are taught in English, there is a chance that the language development could happen within the education classrooms, not only the preparation courses (Spencer 2009; Quirke & Zagallo 2009). Student A's, B's and C's answers in the interview indicated that other education courses hold importance in their language development. That benefited their understanding of how to structure clear and purposeful reflections which were done through the practicum courses (Brown 2007; Spencer 2009). Furthermore, it appeared that reflections combined both the formality of IELTS writing and the informality of free written pieces. This is due to the fact that both IELTS writing and reflections undergo an assessment process which grants a grade to the EFL learner (Lukin et al. 2011).

A contradicting result also found when the researcher used IELTS descriptors and reflections criteria, other factors can contribute in differing the IELTS band from the performance in writing reflections, such as having different markers, band descriptors and criteria for marking (Gitsaki et al. 2014; Panahi & Mohammaditabar 2015). The difference in the people who are assessing the IELTS test and reflections can be a major factor, due to the differences in the marking scheme that each one follows. Furthermore, some designed criteria at university levels may not be created to assess the language in depth, rather to assess the general concept of the task (Freeman & Freeman

2001; Vialle et al. 2008). This was presented through the criteria followed in education to assess the performance in reflections, as more attention was given to how the reflections are representing their purposes rather than focusing on the language aspects. Therefore, IELTS and education criteria are not considered as strong measures of language performance, as each measures specific skills and context.

## **5.2. Conclusion**

This study was implemented to explore the correlation of IELTS band and preparation courses to students' writing of reflective journals in one of the UAE higher education institutions. The research found that the IELTS band cannot be given a final judgment, as there are different factors affecting it. Students' level in English, previous language knowledge, study input and preparation courses can all affect the IELTS as a tool for language testing (Ata 2015; Quirke & Zagallo 2009). Yet, the study revealed that the preparation courses had an impact on reflective writing as it added further input and consolidation to the language for two participants.

The students' language and writing showed improvement as the students progressed through the levels. They built further confidence towards writing reflective journals which were observed through their reflection samples (Bamberg 2011; Hughes 2003). Their ability to critically identify issues, anticipate solutions, critically judge the experience, provide opinions and recommendations for further enhancement were constructed effectively (Hyland 2007). That change was notable at the end of the study levels and after the second IELTS band, which could be due to their education studies or preparation courses leading to that improvement.

The students' development in English writing and other skills were identified through the students' responses to questions in the interviews. The IELTS reports and materials from the preparation courses also provided a clearer idea on the amount of change in the language. The students who took the preparation courses were provided with the opportunities to practice and improve their writing experiences and language while preparing for the IELTS test. Lessons in the preparation courses were designed to cover broader skills of writing and text organization than just only IELTS writing tests (Panahi & Mohammaditabar 2015; Slavin 2014; Wilson 2016). However, the student who didn't take the course developed also the language which can be related to the input given through her study at the college. In spite of that, the IELTS score was considered highly important simply because it is a requirement, as the students stated in the interviews that there were other factors leading to the change in their language and writing of reflections.

The amount of knowledge gained through education courses and how reflections were assessed also helped to shape the students' understanding of reflective journals. The students learned to narrow their focus on narrating the practicum experience and identified strengths and weaknesses to be improved (Spencer 2009). The findings also show that the course criteria assessing the language may not match the one for IELTS, which presents another factor to support IELTS requirements may differ from academic writing at universities.

To conclude, students' second language learning performance and ability cannot be judged by only a language test such as IELTS. The students faced challenges in learning language and understanding different genres, which they can overcome through additional practice and input given by instructors.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

Two main types of recommendations are stated to improve this study; one is related to the improvement of writing reflective journal, and the other is related to further researches to be conducted related to this study. Based on the findings, it is recommended that language learning must not be separated from college assignments; especially if that requires the use of language to write a report, reflection or essay. Another aspect is that EFL learners require further consolidation of language even if they are at a college level, and more emphasis on language assessment needs to be presented through assessments other than IELTS. In addition, providing additional sessions to improve language skills is highly recommended to add further to students' performances.

Regarding further research to be conducted in a similar field of the study, it can be extended to compare the impact of IELTS performance to the new testing system implemented in the UAE higher education, which is called EmSAT (Emirates Standard Test). Another replication of the study could consider the correlation between the EmSAT test and English as foreign language learners' performance. It is also recommended to use the discourse analysis in this research and implement it to a wider range of participants. This will help to identify the development of performance in writing reflections, to consider the impact of college courses on students writing development. It can be also extended to measure the development of other language skills for novice teachers until their graduation not only writing.

### **5.4. Limitations**

The study has limitations which can be due to the size of the focus group as only three students were selected for the research. Therefore, the results cannot represent all English language learners taking the IELTS, and cannot represent all cases of students writing reflections in higher education.

Also the research only involved female students which cannot be generalized over male learners. Another limitation is that due to the time of conducting the research, it was difficult to gain the tools easily from the students as some had already graduated and other lost some documents. For example, students A didn't have the first IELTS band, and students C had not yet reached level eight and therefore hadn't had the eighth reflection. The number of the students taking the preparation courses was considered low which is not enough to measure its effectiveness with the consideration of other students' attitudes toward the course.

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## Appendices

**Appendix 1: Research permission letter to conduct my study with signature of the Dean of Academic Operations at the institution. The research topic has changed slightly but still related to the focus and required similar data.**



12/6/2017

### To whom it may concern

This is to certify that Ms. Fatema Ebrahim Al Awadi with Student ID number 2014201052 is a registered part-time student in the Master of Education offered by The British University in Dubai since January 2015.

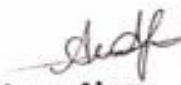
Ms. Al Awadi is currently collecting data for her dissertation (Impacts of IELTS preparation course and scores on Education students' reflective journals throughout their study years).

She is required to gather data through conducting surveys that will help her in writing the final dissertation. Your permission to conduct her research in your organisation is hereby requested. Further support provided to her in this regard will be highly appreciated.

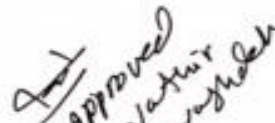
Any information given will be used solely for academic purposes.

This letter is issued on Ms. Al Awadi's request.

Yours sincerely,

  
**Dr. Amer Alaya**  
Head of Academic and Student Administration



  
Approved  
Mr. Nafar  
Al Fawaz

## Appendix 2: Research participants' IELTS reports.

### Student A's IELTS Report

**IELTS™**  
Test Report Form

**NOTE** Admission to undergraduate and post graduate courses should be based on the ACADEMIC Reading and Writing Modules. GENERAL TRAINING Reading and Writing Modules are not designed to test the full range of language skills required for academic purposes. It is recommended that the candidate's language ability as indicated in this Test Report Form be reassessed after two years from the date of the test.

Centre Number  Date 16/MAY/2015 Candidate Number

**Candidate Details**

Family Name

First Name

Candidate ID

Date of Birth  Sex (MF)  F Scheme Code Private Candidate

Country or Region of Origin

Country of Nationality UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

First Language ARABIC

**Test Results**

Listening 6.5 Reading 6.0 Writing 5.5 Speaking 7.0 Overall Band Score 6.5 CEFR Level B2

**Administrator Comments**

**Centre stamp**

**Validation stamp**

**Administrator's Signature**

**Date** 29/05/2015

**Test Report Form Number** 154E001733ALAF113A

**BRITISH COUNCIL** **idp** **CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH** Language Assessment Part of the University of Cambridge

The validity of this IELTS Test Report Form can be verified online by recognising organisations at <http://ielts.udes.org.uk>

## Student B's IELTS Report 1

**IELTS™**  
Test Report Form

ACADEMIC

**NOTE** Admission to undergraduate and post graduate courses should be based on the ACADEMIC Reading and Writing Modules. GENERAL Training Reading and Writing Modules are not designed to test the full range of language skills required for academic purposes. It is recommended that the candidate's language ability be re-assessed after two years from the date of the test.

Centre Number  Date 25/MAR/2017 Candidate Number

**Candidate Details**

Family Name

First Name

Candidate ID

Date of Birth  Sex (M/F) F Scheme Code Private Candidate

Country or Region of Origin

Country of Nationality UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

First Language ARABIC

**Test Results**

Listening 6.0 Reading 6.0 Writing 5.5 Speaking 6.5 Overall Band Score 6.0 CEFR Level B2

**Administrator Comments**



Administrator's Signature 

Date 30/04/2017

Test Report Form Number 16AED19017ALME113A

The validity of this IELTS Test Report Form can be verified online by recognising organisations at <http://ielts.org.uk>

## Student B's IELTS Report 2

INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TESTING SYSTEM					
Test Report Form				ACADEMIC	
<p><b>NOTE</b> Admission to undergraduate and post graduate courses should be based on the ACADEMIC Reading and Writing Modules.  GENERAL TRAINING Reading and Writing Modules are not designed to test the full range of language skills required for academic purposes.  It is recommended that the candidate's language ability as indicated in this Test Report Form be re-assessed after two years from the date of the test.</p>					
Centre Number		Date	12/APR/2014	Candidate Number	
<b>Candidate Details</b>					
Family Name					
First Name					
Candidate ID					
Date of Birth		Sex (M/F)	F	Scheme Code	Private Candidate
Country or Region of Origin					
Country of Nationality	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES				
First Language	ARABIC				
<b>Test Results</b>					
Listening	5.0	Reading	5.5	Writing	5.0
Speaking	6.0	Overall Band Score	6.5		
<b>Administrator Comments</b>					
		 			
Writing Examiner Number		Administrator's Signature			
Speaking Examiner Number		Date	27/04/2014	Test Report Form Number	14AE001075ALME113A
					
The validity of this IELTS Test Report Form can be verified online by recognising organisations at <a href="http://ielts.tesol.org.uk">http://ielts.tesol.org.uk</a>					



## Student C's IELTS Report 1

**IELTS™**  
Test Report Form

ACADEMIC

**NOTE** Admission to undergraduate and post graduate courses should be based on the ACADEMIC Reading and Writing Modules.  
GENERAL TRAINING Reading and Writing Modules are not designed to test the full range of language skills required for academic purposes.  
It is recommended that the candidate's language ability as indicated in this Test Report Form be re-assessed after two years from the date of the test.

Centre Number  Date 09/SEP/2017 Candidate Number

**Candidate Details**

Family Name

First Name

Candidate ID

Date of Birth  Sex (MF)  Scheme Code

Country or Region of Origin

Country of Nationality

First Language

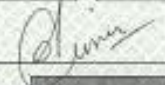
**Test Results**

Listening	5.5	Reading	5.5	Writing	6.0	Speaking	7.0	Overall Band Score	6.0	CEFR Level	B2
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**Administrator Comments**

Centre stamp

Validation stamp

Administrator's Signature 

Date 24/09/2017

Test Report Form Number 17AE023651A/LDA109A

**BRITISH COUNCIL** **idp** **CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH**  
Language Assessment  
Part of the University of Cambridge

The validity of this IELTS Test Report Form can be verified online by recognising organisations at <http://ielts.udes.org.uk>



## Student C's IELTS Report 2

**INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TESTING SYSTEM**

**Test Report Form** ACADEMIC

**NOTE** Admission to undergraduate and post graduate courses should be based on the ACADEMIC Reading and Writing Modules.  
GENERAL TRAINING Reading and Writing Modules are not designed to test the full range of language skills required for academic purposes.  
It is recommended that the candidate's language ability as indicated in this Test Report Form be re-assessed after two years from the date of the test.

Centre Number  Date 22/NOV/2014 Candidate Number

**Candidate Details**

Family Name

First Name

Candidate ID

Date of Birth  Sex (M/F) F Scheme Code Private Candidate

Country or Region of Origin




Country of Nationality UNITED ARAB EMIRATES


First Language ARABIC

**Test Results**




Listening 5.0 Reading 4.5 Writing 5.5 Speaking 6.0 Overall Band Score 5.5

**Administrator Comments**

Administrator's Signature 

Date 07/12/2014 Test Report Form Number 14AED13169ALDA113A

   **CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH**  
Language Assessment  
Part of the University of Cambridge

The validity of this IELTS Test Report Form can be verified online by recognising organisations at <http://elts.ucas.org.uk>

### **Appendix 3: Students A's, B's and C's reflections.**

#### **Student A**

##### **Reflections (Level 1)**

I was satisfied with my experience in the third week. It was really good. I built a good relationship with the students. As usual the students started the lesson with a song and they played a game. I saw some amazing areas at the classroom. There was (new words) area near the board. They put all the new words there to remember them. Also, they have a large board at the back of the class for their activities. The teacher posts their drawings or anything done by them on this board. In addition, they have class rules area, numbers area, super kids area, and spelling princess area.

One of the special needs students joined the class, I was delighted with the way they treated her. The students were helping her and they were good. I felt happy when some of the students asked me to teach them, but I told them that am not ready yet. "It's very important to know how to deal with students and their inappropriate behaviors". (Kelly, 2011)

Every week I learn many things from the teaching practice. I learned how to organize the classroom into amazing areas for the kids. In my opinion, the classroom effects on the students ability to learn.

## **Student A**

### **Reflections (Level 2)**

My last experience in \_\_\_\_\_ was great. It was very useful. I saw how the teacher plans for the lesson. As usual she started the lesson with a warming up then the activities and she ended the lesson with a game. The teacher showed me her lesson preparation. She writes what she will do for the introduction, activity and plenary. She writes the materials she needs. She told me that planning for the lesson helps in organizing ideas. She told me that thinking about the needed materials and how the lesson should starts and ends are very important too.

I was impressed by the teacher ways in planning and preparation. Everything was organized and written. I was impressed too by her ways in rewarding groups. They have to put star under their group name and if they did something wrong the teacher remove the star and put it for another group.

I think that planning is the most important thing to the successful teacher. Planning helps in managing time and organizing activities.

**Student A****Reflections (Level 3)**

I agree with the statement which mentioned that a brilliant lesson plan is not enough and kids don't always respond to adults. I think that preparing a great lesson is important to grab the students' attention but that's not enough to avoid misbehavior problems. Good management skills are important to control the classroom. Teachers should try to understand the students' behavior and the different types of misbehavior actions. That will help teachers to prevent misbehavior problems instead of dealing with the problem, and that will save their time (Yuan, 2012). Firstly, students may have home problems such as break up, parental control and punishment, which can affect them negatively, and cause them to misbehave to get the teacher's and other's attention (Burden, 2003). Secondly, children may be affected by some TV programs that show violence. In this case, having a great lesson plan will not be enough. The teacher should have good management skills to deal with the students who act violently and hurt others. Thirdly, the teacher should have a strong personality to deal with the students. The teacher's manner while teaching is as important as what she teaches. Of course teachers should have a good lesson plan but they should be confident and self-assured, because that will affect the students (Kyriacou, 2007). She should be able to use her eye contact effectively to control the classroom and notice the students.

## Student A

### Reflections (Level 4)

During the three weeks at School, I observed an English teacher during her sessions, activities and strategies, also I took notes about what happened under some specific key areas. The purpose of this observation is to see literacy in action over the three week in this school. I tried to observe my MST during her English sessions in KG-2S class especially the literacy sessions. I found that my MST read stories which was related to the theme or topic they have. I also noticed that she gave them activities which are suitable for their level such as painting a picture or writing their own stories. According to Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2004) "reading practice may be derived from listening work or may lead to writing. In this way, reading becomes integrated with other language skills" (p.113). I think that it was a good idea to use activities which matches the children's level, linked to the theme they have and integrate different skills in one activity, because it develops their comprehension of the story they listened to. I also discovered that she read the story more than once in order to provide more comprehension about the story and the language used in the book. Furthermore, my MST used eliciting while reading the stories in order to see if the students are paying attention or not and to make them use the language in the story. I believe that it was good teaching strategy to check that the learners listened to her or not. The teacher should also consider the level of motivation of the book for the students to make the learners listen and answer the teacher's questions.

In addition, I noticed that my MST brought some activities which were related to the story to let the children use them in their free play during the session. As Peregoy and Boyle (2005) stated "whether you are collecting materials for theme cycles or teach a standardized curriculum, it is important to obtain a variety of resources to accommodate varying levels of reading ability and English language proficiency" (p.327). I think that letting children to have more exposure to the story is a good idea because it helps the children to use the language by themselves with out being asked by the teacher. The teacher should consider the age of the children and what kind of games they like to do in order to provide activities which children are interested in. Moreover, I found that my SST put children's work on displays after finishing their work to provide and develop comprehension about the story. Another factor the teacher should consider is to do some activities which have good learning purposes to put it as display.



**Student A****Reflections (Level 5)**

This was my last week of this teaching practice. I tried to enjoy every single moment and learn from my teacher. I tried to spend more time with the students and help them with what they need. This school helped me to learn many things. I learned that the school environment is very important and it affects the students. I learned that the teacher is the students' second mother. She cares a lot about them and she helps in raising them as well. I learned that the students do not learn maths, science, Arabic and Islamic only. They also learn different things that will allow them to develop their life skills. For example, every day, the school choses a class to clean the school during the break time. They ask them to bring gloves and big garbage bags to clean the school and the playground. I think that this is a very important step to create a positive learning environment. Firstly, they'll learn how to be responsible. Secondly, they'll learn the importance of being clean. Thirdly, they'll how to contribute in creating a better school environment. In addition, the teacher also encourages the students to create a better environment. Every week, she takes 5 students from the PE class for 15 minutes to clean the class. When they finish, she gives them stickers. That's a part of the positive reinforcement that helps the students to repeat the good behavior. I liked these idea a lot and I'll apply it when I'll be a teacher, because I think that we're responsible to build the students' personality and teach them different values that will help them to be better people in the future. As mentioned in the strategic initiatives of the student school life, and according to The Ministry of Education Strategy, the school should involve the students in such supporting school activities that help the student develop life skills.

**Student A****Reflections (Level 6)**

During the second week in \_\_\_\_\_ school, I spent most of my time in planning lessons, observing my teacher and my students, and talking with my teacher about the best ways to teach the students. She supported me a lot and she tried to help me in improving my teaching skills. She gave me many advices and she told me that creating a positive environment for the students is very important to enhance their learning. I believe in that and as I observed in \_\_\_\_\_ school, the classroom environment was really comfortable and well organized. It helps and supports the students' learning, and it affects them positively. For example, my mentor teacher's class was well organized and the classroom environment was supportive. The walls were full of pictures, words, labels, numbers and phrases which will support the students' learning. All the classes were provided with technology such as computers and data shows, to help them in making the lesson easier and to help all the students with different learning styles. The teacher tried to provide all the necessary tools for the students such as pencils, crayons, papers, and scissors. In addition, each student has his own white board and markers which will help them to solve problems in math and other lessons. Furthermore, the classroom environment is provided with stories which will develop their reading, and many games which will help them to have fun while learning. According to The Ministry of Education Strategy, ensuring excellent learning environment and tools is very important to ensure that students' needs are met.

**Student A****Reflections (Level 7)**

On Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> of May, I did my third lesson for the literacy class. It was based on a story that they read before with their teacher and the story called (Elephant Dance). They had to write a similar beginning of the story but they had to change some settings to be about themselves. They changed the country, the characters and some of the events. Firstly, I started the lesson by a game which was charades. I divided the classroom into two groups (boys and girls). They chose one student from their team to act what's written on the card and they had to know the name of the movie. They were talented and their acting was very good. I think it would be better if I mixed the boys and the girls in the groups because the boys' team was teasing the girls and they were saying that they'll win and so on. I tried to calm them down after the game. Then, I mentioned the learning objectives for them and I showed them the beginning of the Elephant Dance story. They read it together and they circled the adjectives, similes and the noun phrases. Then, for the building knowledge stage, I showed them how they could turn the story to be about themselves. I wrote the beginning story by myself as an example. I used some adjectives, similes and noun phrases, and I asked them to read the example together. We discussed what I've written then I explained the success criteria before they go to write their stories. The success criteria were about having adjectives, similes, noun phrases and speech marks in their stories and that's very important. They went back to their groups and they started writing their own stories. I worked with the lower ability students who had different worksheets. Their worksheets had blanks, some helping words and word bank. I worked with them to write similes, brainstorm their ideas and so on. I tried my best to scaffold them to make the task easier for them and to teach them new skills in writing. Scaffolding is really important as Vygotsky mentioned in his ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) theory. He believed that helping and assisting children are important to the children because they'll be supported, they'll have the chance to achieve and show some progress in their work (Vygotskian Approach, n.d.). After twenty minutes they came back at the carpet and they took their partners' worksheet to evaluate it and check if it has the success criteria elements. I wasn't happy after I finished my lesson because the lower ability students needed more effort. I spent most of the time with them and I didn't have enough time to move around and see all the students' work. In addition, it would be better if I used the points in this lesson to try to be the best. For the next lesson I'll try to give the lower ability students hints which are clearer so they can work independently. As a result I'll be able to give all the students my attention fairly. In addition, I wasn't feeling well and I think that affected my classroom management little bit.



## Student A

### Reflections (Level 8)

My last lesson was on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2014. It taught the students science and I was nervous at the beginning. I knew that we should include reading in the lesson so I wrote a story and read it to the students in the lesson. In this lesson, I mixed the students together so the higher ability students would help the lower ability students. I prepared my lesson using BUILT method. Firstly, for the engagement stage, I played the hangman game with them and they knew that the lesson is about electricity immediately because they saw the circuits on their tables. I think it would be better if I used different activity because the hangman was very simple, easy and fast. Then, I asked them to write on their worksheets what they know about electricity and what they want to find out. Most of them wrote that they want to know how the electricity works. For the building knowledge stage, I showed the students a video, which was a story about electricity. It was about a family that they faced problem when the lights went off after a rainy day, so they decided to explore the electricity. I asked them questions while watching to make sure that they were paying attention. We discussed together what they saw and what they would do if their lights went off. I told them that we're going to explore the electricity and I let one student to read the learning objective which was (to explore and know how to make a circuit). Then, I moved to the transition stage, I explained some words such as circuit, bulb and cell. I told them that I'm going to read a story for them and they should focus because they're going to tell me the problem. The story was about a kid who had a damaged flashlight. He went to Mr. Grant's store to fix it and Mr. Grant said that the battery is fine. So I asked them (what can he do instead?). They told me to change the bulb and that was correct. I showed them two pictures of two different bulbs. One of the bulbs wasn't damaged and the other one was damaged and had a gap in the wires which means the circuit was broken. I asked them about the difference between the two pictures so they realized that the circuit must be connected for the electricity. It would be better if I brought two real bulbs to show them the difference between the damaged and the normal one in reality. We discussed together then I asked them to go in their groups and work together to make their own circuits. They were enjoying their time while trying and they showed me and presented what they did. They were exploring and enjoying their time. Some of the groups tried to make a very big circuit so they added more batteries and bulbs and they noticed that the light was brighter when they added more cells (batteries). Letting children discover their environment by themselves is really important for their learning and development as Piaget mentioned in his theory. He believed that children should work by themselves to explore and discover

which will help them to develop their cognitive skills while experiencing the environment around them (McLeod, 2009). After exploring and making the circuit, I distributed worksheets and I gave them the instructions. They had to write what they saw and they had a word bank at the bottom of the worksheet. I think that I should still work on my management skills because the students were very excited and they were hyper so it was hard a little bit to control them while making the circuits. It would be better if I had a shaker or bell to grab their attention faster.

**Student B****Reflections (Level 1)**

In this lesson , I have teach the students spirit things , first of all I have teach them about sounds , then they have give me some example of the sounds , and in the last activity , they complete the sentences that they have it in their books with the correct word . The students were motivated with me , they always want to answer to get points , they like the lesson a lot because it is little bet have some challenge for them specially when they were answering the sentence because they are sometime put the wrong answer for the sentence . And when they were in challenge I were in encourage them by saying to them that they will have yellow points if they answer the question in the right way .

The students in this lesson were active and attractive , and when I were explain the lesson they were attention with me , they want to listen to me , to know how to answer the questions . I think I should have another strategy to make the students quite and to do not miss behave , this strategy should be different that the red points strategy . I believe that each teacher should have different strategy to avoid missing behave in her class room , for the next time I will use different way for managing the students .

## **Student B**

### **Reflections (Level 2)**

In this lesson , we have learn different things , first we have learn the sounds then we have learn some vocabulary words .first I have let my students to watch a short video that talk about the sounds , and I have engage them to the lesson by this video , In each lesson that I teach , I like to engage the students to the lesson , by making an activity or warm up . This warm up or activity for instance a video , game , active work sheet ,story , role play or even a song would make the students more active and motivated in the class room , In addition that will make the students more attention with the teacher , so I believe that each teacher should make something interesting such as videos , songs , active work sheets ,... that will let the students involve in the lesson and feel interesting .

I have make a mistake during the lesson , I have not check the volume of the video and the sound of the microphone was not loud , and that effect on the students , they were not hear the lesson well , and they were tell me for many times that they do not hear well , so for the next time , I will check for every thing for the microphones and for the laptop .

**Student B****Reflections (Level 3)**

Today my lesson plan was little bet different , in this lesson my students have describe the pictures and write a story of these pictures . This lesson was enjoyable to them , first I let them see the pictures, then they have give their opinion , I have lesson to their sentences and I choose the best , each student want to give her sentence to write it on the board , they want from every one to write their sentence , so they have do their best to let me choose their sentences . Then I have give them worksheets to write about a character they like , some of the students have write about and I feel proud when they were talking about me . and in the end of the lesson I have let my students to do a role play about the story they write about . this activities have make the students motivated and active , also I like when I were raising my voice the students were watching me , and the noise became less .

I have notice that I have a negative thing in my lesson , I have not move around the students more , I am just was standing in front of the white board , I do not know why this have happen , however in my lesson I always move around them , so I have decide to do not repeat this problem again .

## Student B

### Reflections (Level 4)

In the first day of my teaching practice in \_\_\_\_\_ school , I have meet \_\_\_\_\_ he show us his room if we need any help ,also he show us the school facilities . Then we set in a room and he tell us in which class we are going to . My MST Mr.Banger was absent : \_\_\_\_\_ ask me to go \_\_\_\_\_ , I stay the whole day with him , he was kind with me , he told me that they are in the reading week , in this day they were reading stories for the hole day , the students were moving from class to other to listen to different stories from different teachers .

In my second day at school I met my \_\_\_\_\_ he talk with me a lot he give me his plan and show me from he pickup his students in the morning , I met his students and his assistant \_\_\_\_\_. During this week we met the parents too and I have learnt how to speak with parent and we should have an answer for their questions ,In addition we should be polite with them and do not be angry, also from this meeting I have know the level of each students and where is his weakness, and that will help a lot during my practice . This week was important to me as a teacher because it help to know how to read a story for the students and were should I focus during my reading . Moreover in the last day of this week all of the school were wearing their favorite character clothes and it was big competition for the best character .

**Student B****Reflections (Level 5)**

On Monday, October 24, 2016, I have teach a Math lesson in School, my kids were active during my lesson,because I have involve and engage them in my lesson by making a little play with Inky puppet ,that he ask the students to help him in adding numbers.From this play my students understand the main goal of the lesson.In addition during the different activities in groups,my students were involved and answering the questions well.Furthermore in the end of my lesson I think I have achieve my goal and they understand the purpose of the lesson .All of my students were in control and I have manage them well by using dojo points and saying a sentence that all of them became quite which is Eyes on me then the students say eyes on you .This sentence is really effective sentence in my class.Also I believe that I have control their brain with me when they were doing the activities.So in my opinion I think my lesson were very good because I have achieve my goal.

## **Student B**

### **Reflections (Level 6)**

On Tuesday, March 7, 2017, I have teach a science lesson which is light energy for grade 5, honestly I was satisfied about my lesson because I introduce my lesson in a mice way to attract the students to me and that by playing a hangman game. Then I have use the technology to explain my lesson by let them watch the video, after that I distribute the worksheets depending on the levels and I think this a strength point for me. I think I need to focus more on my voice because it sometimes become low, also I need to focus on my language and improve it too. I believe that I have control my students and I mange their behave by using points for the whole class and for individual. My students show their understanding of the lesson by writing their knowledge of the lesson in a piece of paper have the light shape then we stick it outside the classroom. Furthermore at the end of the lesson some students come to me and tell that they like the lesson and they want from me to teach them in the next day.



**Student B****Reflections (Level 7)**

After teaching the lesson of verb to have and family tree, I realized that I did all what I was included in my lesson plan. Even when the class took longer than what was expected, I did not have to feel worried because I was already planned for an extra activity. Moreover, all the stages of the built were practical, because I provided suitable activities that met with students learning needs at each stage in the lesson. I felt that most when I did the reflection stage, I realized that the students were understood my teaching and when they presented their family tree, and talked about how many brothers and sisters do they have, they used correctly verb "to have" and "singular and plural nouns" in their sentences. Now as the lesson is speaking lesson, that is why I chose "Spot the difference between two different pictures". However, the students were challenged when they came to the front of the classroom presented their family tree, and talk about it to their classmates. I believe that planning lesson for English language learners is a challenging because it needs an effective strategy to facilitate learning for the learners. So I used scaffolding strategies to assist and support the students. As one of tasks was about drawing a family tree, I provided to the students an example of my family tree to model the task for them, then when they were drawing their family tree I observed that they got the concept of the modeling, and they were just applying very well. In addition, monitoring the students helped me to observe the students while they worked, and it provided for me opportunities to manage students' behavior and stopped any misbehavior. Overall, I am happy that I achieved my teaching goal in this lesson.

**Student B****Reflections (Level 8)**

How do you know the student already know? How can you determine what are the students' needs or strengths in certain areas? How do you promote students' reflection and critical thinking? The questioning technique helped me to cover these elements effectively in my teaching. Through this week, I focused on this technique in my lessons. So what I noticed that the questioning in an interactive way in the lesson encouraged the students to think more deeply about information that they have given. So in the previous teaching lesson and from my observations in other subjects, I observed that most of the students were just guessing the answers rather than thinking about it. So during this week whenever I was expect answers I was always reminding them to think more about the answer, not just guessing. So I got what I expected from them and they started to give more critical answers. Moreover, I used questioning technique to guide students through new lesson content, making connections with previous learning and with the students' background knowledge. So that provided me in my lesson planning to determine when I need to do more practice or to move to a new lesson. Another power of the questions is checking students' understanding. I used the questions to do refection on what the students understood and what they did not. In addition, this useful technique encourages the interaction and builds confidence for those students who have low self-esteem. This provided the students the courage to speak up and share ideas or answers. However, the challenge that I faced when I used questioning that sometimes it took a little bit long time my lesson's time especially that I am a type of teacher who wants to give the students opportunities to talk in the class more than I. So next time I will develop the use of questioning in my class in a proper time.

## **Student C**

### **Reflections (Level 1)**

Roles and responsibilities of the teachers mean how the teachers are managing the class environment by control the students to have a great classroom management. In this task, I observe my mentor teacher for all of the day to take some notes about her roles and responsibilities in her teaching.

First of all, through the day and after the morning assembly. I was writing down what I have seen in the roles and responsibility of the teacher. I was attending with grade 12 art section1. I found some of the students were talking while the tutor was explaining the lesson. Then the teacher looked at the naughty students and separated them into other groups to stop talking, but return talk during the class time. The teacher warned them for the second time, but they ignored her. In that time, I was very surprised about the student's behavior because they were respectful for their teacher, friends and the class time.

Secondly, in the second class with the same class that was the 12 art 1. I was moving around the groups to see their work and to take some photos. Suddenly, the teacher asks her student to stop working and be ready to present their job. When the second group was presenting their work one student from the class was playing with the pen and she was distracting her friends, the tutor took her pen and through it in the bin. After that, the teacher took this student and kept it separate from her group and she was still talking.

However, the last class I attend it with my mentor teacher was the 12 science class section 1. The students were on time, and my instructor was explaining to them some grammar rules and gives them some examples to stick the lesson in their mind. While the teacher was teaching some of the students were raising their hands to ask her some questions. I was delighted with the student behavior because they were asking her one by one to benefit their friends and themselves.

Finally, I like the science class because they change the mood of my mentor teacher from a bad mood to a good mood and being happy. However, the Art class was too much noisy and they have a lot of misbehavior acts that make my mentor in a bad mood. Such as when they were talking a lot without permission.

## Student C

### Reflections (Level 2)

Mathematics is the most interesting curriculum with the learners. They can use it everywhere and in every time to practice, learning new structures and to keep in mind. Throughout my TP at school, I attend a math class with grade 10 to complete my teaching practice booklet.

Firstly, I observed the math teacher for two hours, to see what the lesson is today, so the lesson was full of concepts that students need to practice more and keep it in their mind. She did a lot of activities to learn the students. The lesson were hard to the students she tries to make it clear and easy, but she use a video from the last year students work then she start the lesson . She teaches students about sin, cos, and tan she did an activity for each one alone. Such as the (sin) she presents it with an iPad she gives each group an IPad. The lesson was into Edmodo app to make it easily. However, she use the laptop to present the (cos) using their calculator and their notes. Besides, when she finished the last concept it was (tan) she ask the students to answer the exercise questions in their notes and she sit with students who need more explanation. Then she asks the students to come to correct their works (see figure1). On the other period, she gives the students new concepts which was about the mean, median and the mode. In this class she didn't explain it for the students but it was answering the questions in their notes, so students were able to answer the questions then they finish the questions for this lesson (see figure2).

Finally, I have fun with math lesson and I took a lot of information from the teacher. Also I remember the lesson because she was teaching me in grade 10, but she now she use a new ways to teach students the lesson. She use the laptop and the IPad, but when she was teaching me she use only the laptop.

## Student C

### Reflections (Level 3)

This lesson is the second lesson that I will teach it for grade five girl's students. Students will revise the grammar skills which are the past and present tense in the story " My trip to Cartagena" through forty-five minutes. The overall aim of this lesson is to revise some of the grammar skills and differentiate between how the words change from the present to the past and the opposite.

Firstly, the one aspect that I feel I did very well was how I manage the students in the class, besides how the students were able to learn, and how I was able to teach them smoothly. I think it works because my students and I were working together to establish a positive learning which leads to have a successful lesson because we managed the time and we were able to finish the lesson on time. In addition, my students helped me to finish the lesson on time because I have divided the lesson between them and I. The lesson was about " My Trip To Cartagena" story, I have read to them the first page, and they worked with me to find out the past and the present verbs together, then I have divided the rest of the story between the groups each two groups took the same page. Furthermore, they were able to find the verbs by themselves, and while they were working in groups they were talking in English, and they show me their work when I was moving to check their work. In my point of view, teachers should have a good relation with the students because as (Robert, Marzano and Jana, 2003) mentioned that " teachers who had high-quality relationships with their students had fewer discipline problems and rule violations than those who did not have high-quality relationships". That shows teachers who have a good relation with the students will have a good classroom management better than they will have the teachers who do not have any relation with the students.

During the class and after I have finished with the students the activity and reading the story, one student raised her hand to ask me what is the meaning of the word fire, but the students started to laugh at her and she was very upset. I asked the students to stop laughing at her and to clap their hands to her because she have a question, but she do not sit without asking the question.

I should focus on asking the students about the meaning of the easiest word before the hardest word because if I ask the students I will help the students who do not know the meaning of the word to know the meaning and the students who know the meaning to share their knowledge with other students.

In the next lesson I will focus on:

- 1- Student's level.
- 2- Student's prior knowledge.
- 3- Explain the lesson deeply for the students.



## Student C

### Reflections (Level 4)

This lesson was my first lesson in my teaching practice at \_\_\_\_\_ School. The lesson was for foundation stage two students. They are ten boys and thirteen girls. It was on November 7, 2016. The lesson was a reading lesson about "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" lesson for twenty five minutes.

Firstly, the overall aim of this lesson was to teach the students different types of food through reading the story. Students are going to learn different types of food that the caterpillar ate in the story. Secondly, I have supported my lesson with different activities such as; the caterpillar bottle, the matching worksheet, and the caterpillar crafting table. Different kinds of activities allow students to choose their favorite activity and do it. Thirdly, students enjoyed the lesson because they were active with me, so that shows me that the activities were suitable for students and I was able to take a feedback from students if they like the activities or not because activities help teachers to have a feedback about students learning process ( Interactive Classroom Activities, (n,d)) . The very caterpillar bottle with food was the enjoyable activity that students like it more because they were challenging to come and put the food that they heard it from the story in the bottle.

Actually, I liked the lesson because the students were able to listen to me and I teach them the whole concept that I have prepared for them. Also, Miss Sims liked the lesson, and she said that the activities were appropriate with students' level and the students were able to do each activity, but there were some recommendations that I need to develop such as; make sure that students are following the classroom rules, in the story I can teach them phoneme "C" and "B", and also I can use the cards to write the fruit name with pictures.

## Student C

### Reflections (Level 5)

On Monday, March 20, 2017, I taught my last Math lesson for grade three boys and girls students. The lesson took 40 minutes, and it went well, but as always no lesson without mistakes that I need to focus and change them, so in this lesson I have reviewed 3 As a Factor lesson.

Firstly, I started the lesson with greeting the students, then I did some movements activities, then I asked my teacher assistant to pretend that there is a message coming from outside in a basket with six puzzles. Secondly, I did an activity in the power point and it was useful for the students because I did it as a competition between the six groups in the class, and the students were busy for all the class time in answering the questions on the game. Then I complete the lesson with assisting them using the worksheet in three levels low, middle, and high. All of these activities went good, but the students were hyper active because of the competition and they were working hard to get the correct answer for the questions in the worksheet. . When I was checking their work they answered all the work correctly even lower level students,

On the other hand, while I was moving around the group to check their work, I saw some students were struggling to finding out the answers, so I stopped all the class and I teaches them the strategy of counting the three lines in each finger. For example,  $3 \times 7 = ?$ , they should count the three lines in the seven finger to get the answer 21. The students was little bit confused but when I did with them one example they get the idea.

Generally, the lesson was good, and my MCT liked it because of the different activities that I have applied to the students in the class, but I when I was applying the new strategy she suggest to ask her or my MST. In the future if I am going to teach Math , I will try to ask my colleague or my mentors if I need help.



## **Student C**

### **Reflections (Level 6)**

Teachers are working hard to provide a unique education for their learners to help them improve and succeed in their studies. As a teacher, I am trying to do my best in planning to help my students understand the lesson well by providing different materials and activities to support them in the learning process.

Throughout different observation feedbacks from my mentors in the school and in the college, I have prepared well for the lesson by adding details in my lesson plan and that helps me to get a good feedback from my MST and MCT and both of them said that I was well planned for the lesson and the materials were prepared.

However, they both recommend that I should work more in my assessment and timing because I used to spend lots of time in the explaining because my students needs more support in this part ,but in me next teaching practice I will work hard to improve my timing and assessment.

## **Student C**

### **Reflections (Level 7)**

On the 12 of November, 2017, I taught this lesson which was a revision on the vocabulary and information learned through the unit.

I started the lesson with some questions for the different groups in order to give me some information about the different countries, also I gave each group points for their correct answers. This strategy helped the students to work effectively and involve all the different abilities in the group to find the correct answer. Furthermore, the students were interacting and using most of the vocabulary learned through the unit. After that, I reviewed the new vocabulary of the unit and other new words using flashcards with pictures. The reason of using this strategy is to help the students remember the words and think about the new words of the lesson.

The last activity I used was the riddles cards which contain the new words of the whole unit. These cards include the definition of the words where one students read the cards and other peers in the group had to guess the meaning of these words. This activity was done in groups and they were playing the game effectively. This activity helped the students to learn, recycle and consolidate meanings of vocabulary words. Also it helped them to link between the definition of the word and its meaning.

To conclude, I think that this was an excellent lesson because the students were wholly involved in the activities I used. Also they learned and reviewed the new vocabulary through indirect learning.

## Appendix 4: Students A's interview questions and answers.

### Student A Interview Questions

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Emirati</b>
<b>University Level/Degree</b>	<b>Bachelor degree / graduate</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> February 2018</b>

**1. How do you feel about the International Testing Language System (IELTS)?**

It's a good tool to measure students' speaking, listening, writing and reading skills. However, there are many external factors that could affect the students' score, which might reduce its reliability.

**2. Do you think IELTS test is an effective tool to measure students' performances in English? To what extent?**

I'd score its effectiveness 6/10. It might be effective in giving us a general idea about the student's level in English. However, at that exact time, many factors could affect the score. The student might be ill or nervous, which doesn't give a very reliable result.

**3. Did your English language change after taking the IELTS exam? How?**

I don't think IELTS changed any of my English language skills. It all depended on my previous knowledge, and nothing changed after taking the exam.

**4. What challenges did you face in writing reflective journals at your early levels in the field of Education studies?**

Writing journals weekly and even daily sometimes helped to improve my writing skills as we got feedback from our teachers. I learned how to evaluate my lessons and write about the lesson weaknesses and strengths.

**5. Did your language level change as you progressed through the levels in your study in Education? How?**

Of course, there's a huge difference. The Education program allowed me to use my English effectively as I worked in different schools as a student teacher. I was using and practicing my English all the time with many teachers and students. I even joined private schools and worked with foreign teachers which was really helpful in getting the right language from them.

**6. Did you take any preparation classes to improve your writing? To what extent did these classes impact your writing of reflections?**

No I didn't take any additional classes. My progress in writing was through attending my regular classes at colleges and writing assignments and journals.

**7. How did your writing of reflective journals changed as you progress through your study levels?**

At the beginning, it was mostly descriptive. Then, I learned how to be critical as well.

**8. What factors helped in improving your learning of the English language?**

- Being at different schools for teaching practice.
- Writing journals regularly.
- Interacting with different students, teachers from different nationalities.
- and of course, our English teachers at college who helped us to practice the right skills of English the whole time

## Student B Interview Questions

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Emirati</b>
<b>University Level/ Degree</b>	<b>Level 8</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>Wednesday, January 31, 2018</b>

**1. How do you feel about the International Testing Language System (IELTS)?**

- IELTS is a reliable test that examines students' levels in the four skills of the English Language which are speaking, listening, writing and reading. I think that IELTS test can be challenging to some students due to their level in English. However, I believe that if the students worked hard to improve and develop their English, they will easily pass the test.

**2. Do you think IELTS test is an effective tool to measure students' performances in English? To what extent?**

- IELTS test is really an effective tool to measure the learners' performance in the four skills. Since it provides you with a score for each section which helps you to determine your level in each skill.

**3. Did your English language change after taking the IELTS exam? How?**

- Yes, my English language has improved after taking the IELTS exam. The reason behind this improvement, is continuous practicing and preparing for the exam. In order to get band 6 in the exam, I started to watch various Youtube channels that explains the sections of the exam in details. Also, I joined IELTS preparation classes to improve my English language.



**4. What challenges did you face in writing reflective journals at your early levels in the field of Education studies?**

- I faced some challenges during writing my reflective journals at the early levels in the major of Education. The two main challenges were committing grammar mistakes and lacking suitable vocabulary to explain my ideas. However, by progressing through the levels I was able to improve my language, overcome these challenges and fix my errors.

**5. Did your language level change as you progressed through the levels in your study in Education? How?**

- I noticed a remarkable difference in my language level since I joined the Education field. Attending Education classes and reading English books helped me to improve my language skills.

**6. Did you take any preparation classes to improve your writing? To what extent did these classes impact your writing of reflections?**

- Yes, I took an IELTS preparation class in the college to improve my writing. My teacher helped me a lot by explaining writing strategies that I can use when I have a timed writing task. Furthermore, he taught me a simple trick to count the words faster in order to save time. By attending the preparation class, I have learned how to extract information from diagrams in order to write paragraphs that describe the diagram.

I believe that my writing had improved after attending this writing class. The reason behind my improvement is the intensive practice we had during the class.

**7. How did your writing of reflective journals changed as you progress through your study levels?**

During each level we had to write different reflective journals. As I progressed through the levels, I have noticed that my writing of reflective journals had improved. I believe that the continuous practice that we do in the English classes we attend, had impacted positively on our writing skills.

**8. What factors helped in improving your learning of the English language?**

I believe that my English language had improved due to several factors which are:

1. IELTS classes
2. Youtube Channels
3. IELTS' Website Practices
4. Education program classes each semester.

### Student C Interview Questions

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Emirati</b>
<b>University Level/Degree</b>	<b>Level 7</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>January 30, 2018</b>

**1. How do you feel about the International Testing Language System (IELTS)?**

I feel that International Testing Language System (IELTS) is like a garden who wants someone to plant flowers to attract people attention to come and see the colorful flowers. Also, at the same time I feel it's like a competition for everyone who would prove his/her abilities in different skills such as; speaking, reading, listening, and writing. As well, it's a beneficial system for Emirati people because English is the second communication language that have been used in the UAE. Besides, nowadays foreign people are working with the Emirati people in the same company, and people should communicate with them in English. For example, they talk, write and read emails that are written in English, learning new words from the foreign people, so the IELTS system can support Emirati students to be able to improve their language effectively.

**2. Do you think IELTS test is an effective tool to measure students' performances in English? To what extent?**

I think the IELTS test is an effective tool to measure students' performance in English as a second language because it helps students to identify their weakness and strength based on literacy skills which has been built through the learning process at schools. Also, it encourages students to work hard on improving their language to be able to join colleges and universities because it's one of the requirements to enter the bachelor year to be able to complete their high studies to achieve their ambitions to get their dreamed job. Furthermore, as a student teacher who got band 6 in IELTS exam to enter year 4 I have seen that through the test, I noticed my strength in speaking



and writing skills in English as my second language, and also, I saw that I need to improve myself in both reading and listening skills to get a high score, so I am planning now to work hard to improve myself to get band 7 to complete my master in Education.

**3. Did your English language change after taking the IELTS exam? How?**

My English has improved a lot after I took the IELTS exam and especially after I got an IELTS course in the **English Language Centre** since I graduated from the high school because I used English for all the time I was in the class and while I am practicing for the IELTS exam. Also, when I took the exam I saw that my skills in speaking have been improved and I used higher levels of words to be supported while I am speaking for two minutes. Furthermore, after I joined education and through doing different presentations I saw that my English has been improved and I was able to talk more than two minutes. My writing skills also was influenced and it improved dramatically because I used higher levels of words, linking words, and I that helped and supported me to have the ability to write more than 500 words while I am doing my projects.

**4. What challenges did you face in writing reflective journals at your early levels in the field of Education studies?**

In my first year in Education program, I went to two different government schools, and each week I should submit a reflective journal based on what I have seen, heard, or what I did. Actually, I have faced many challenges, and one of the challenges was using the correct form of verbs to support my writings because the grammar is important to help the reader who reads my reflection to live and have a clear understanding about what I have observed and felt in the position I was in. Also, it was hard for me to justify and reflect on myself or in what I have seen or heard because I thought it's incorrect to include reasoning for every action I did or I observed through my different teaching practice at schools, also my last challenge was to use differentiation of linking words such as; I saw, I noticed, and I have heard or seen, but since I get feedbacks on my writings

and I looked for an example of reflective journals, I learned how I can write the correct form of reflection journals.

**5. Did your language level change as you progressed through the levels in your study in Education? How?**

Through the past three years, and through my learning process in Education department I have seen that my language is improving rather than being weak and that's because I often talk with the teachers in English and some of them helped me to learn from my mistakes and through practicing talking for a long time using English while I am presenting or discussing with my colleagues in the class about an idea or a topic. Besides, some of the Emirati teachers use English as a first language to teach in the classroom and that motivated me to practice my second language with them and learn from them some useful words that I can use while I am talking in English. As well, through training in different private schools I have seen that I practiced my language a lot and it gets improved through the communication with the students and the teachers in the schools while I am planning, saying or writing instructions for my students, explaining and attending different meetings to share my thought and ideas with my MST that supported me to be developed and be confident to communicate using the English language.

**6. Did you take any preparation classes to improve your writing? To what extent did these classes impact your writing of reflections?**

In the first semester in Education, I took an academic reading and writing course and that course helped me to improve my writing because I had an assessment to choose an issue or disease and write about 500-700 words discussing about it and I chose diabetic food, and through searching for different resources to find the information I learned new words to support me while I am writing the report. Furthermore, through getting feedbacks from my tutors based on my writing, I get improved because when I am discussing with them, they show me the correct way to use the



words or the correct form of verbs. Also, I worked hard to check my first draft to notice my mistakes, so I could have a chance to edit my mistakes and learn from them at the same time.

**7. How did your writing of reflective journals changed as you progress through your study levels?**

I think that my reflective journals changed through using high words and working on what I have learned through different courses to show my progress. One of the aspects I still follow is adding more information and justify it by being more reflective. For example, if I use colored paper; green, red, and blue to assign my students in groups of three levels; low, middle, and high, I will mention that using colored paper instead of saying low group, the middle group, and high group will be more affected because it will get students to feel motivated to work. Also, adding artifacts to support my writings helped me a lot to prove my justification about an event I attend or an activity I assigned for my students to improve their adding skill in mathematics. As well, through different levels I try to use different types of quotation such as; paraphrasing and direct quote, and especially when I use paraphrasing, I feel confident to use my words rather than depending on the author's words.

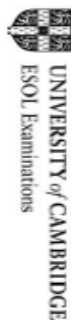
**8. What factors helped in improving your learning of the English language?**

There are lots of factors helped me to improve my English such as;

1. Reading stories then summarize them in English.
2. Watching English movies without subtitles.
3. Communicate with people using English language.
4. Translating Arabic sentences into English.
5. My teachers support at the school.
6. My family support.
7. Listening to the pronunciation of the hard words and repeat them.
8. Joining the English council since I was at the school.
9. Teaching my little brothers at home.
10. Joining  College .
11. IELTS test and the preparation for it.
12. Practicing talking in English in front of the mirror.
13. Writing essays and reports.
14. Doing presentations in English.
15. Teaching practice at different government and private schools.

## Appendix 5: IELTS band descriptors used in preparation courses.

### IELTS TASK 2 Writing band descriptors (public version)



Band	Task Achievement	Coherence and Cohesion	Lexical Resource	Grammatical Range and Accuracy
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fully addresses all parts of the task</li> <li>presents a fully developed position in answer to the question with relevant, fully extended and well supported ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses cohesion in such a way that it attracts no attention</li> <li>skillfully manages paragraphing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a wide range of vocabulary with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a wide range of structures with full flexibility and accuracy; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'</li> </ul>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sufficiently addresses all parts of the task</li> <li>presents a well-developed response to the question with relevant, extended and supported ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sequences information and ideas logically</li> <li>manages all aspects of cohesion well</li> <li>uses paragraphing sufficiently and appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a wide range of vocabulary fluently and flexibly to convey precise meanings</li> <li>skillfully uses uncommon lexical items but there may be occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation</li> <li>produces rare errors in spelling and/or word formation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a wide range of structures</li> <li>the majority of sentences are error-free</li> <li>makes only very occasional errors or inappropriacies</li> </ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>addresses all parts of the task</li> <li>presents a clear position throughout the response</li> <li>presents, extends and supports main ideas, but there may be a tendency to overgeneralise and/or supporting ideas may lack focus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>logically organises information and ideas; there is clear progression throughout</li> <li>uses a range of cohesive devices appropriately although there may be some under-/over-use</li> <li>presents a clear central topic within each paragraph</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a sufficient range of vocabulary to allow some flexibility and precision</li> <li>uses less common lexical items with some awareness of style and collocation</li> <li>may produce occasional errors in word choice, spelling and/or word formation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a variety of complex structures</li> <li>produces frequent error-free sentences</li> <li>has good control of grammar and punctuation but may make a few errors</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>addresses all parts of the task although some parts may be more fully covered than others</li> <li>presents a relevant position although the conclusions may become unclear or repetitive</li> <li>presents relevant main ideas but some may be inadequately developed/unclear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>arranges information and ideas coherently and there is a clear overall progression</li> <li>uses cohesive devices effectively, but cohesion within and/or between sentences may be faulty or mechanical</li> <li>may not always use referencing clearly or appropriately</li> <li>uses paragraphing, but not always logically</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses an adequate range of vocabulary for the task</li> <li>attempts to use less common vocabulary but with some inaccuracy</li> <li>makes some errors in spelling and/or word formation, but they do not impede communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a mix of simple and complex sentence forms</li> <li>makes some errors in grammar and punctuation but they rarely reduce communication</li> </ul>



5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>addresses the task only partially; the format may be inappropriate in places</li> <li>expresses a position but the development is not always clear and there may be no conclusions drawn</li> <li>presents some main ideas but these are limited and not sufficiently developed; there may be irrelevant detail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents information with some organisation but there may be a lack of overall progression</li> <li>makes inadequate, inaccurate or over use of cohesive devices</li> <li>may be repetitive because of lack of referencing and substitution</li> <li>may not write in paragraphs, or paragraphing may be inadequate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a limited range of vocabulary, but this is minimally adequate for the task</li> <li>may make noticeable errors in spelling and/or word formation that may cause some difficulty for the reader</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses only a limited range of structures</li> <li>attempts complex sentences but these tend to be less accurate than simple sentences</li> <li>may make frequent grammatical errors and punctuation may be faulty; errors can cause some difficulty for the reader</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>responds to the task only in a minimal way or the answer is tangential; the format may be inappropriate</li> <li>presents a position but this is unclear</li> <li>presents some main ideas but these are difficult to identify and may be repetitive, irrelevant or not well supported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents information and ideas but these are not arranged coherently and there is no clear progression in the response</li> <li>uses some basic cohesive devices but these may be inaccurate or repetitive</li> <li>may not write in paragraphs or their use may be confusing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses only basic vocabulary which may be used repetitively or which may be inappropriate for the task</li> <li>has limited control of word formation and/or spelling; errors may cause strain for the reader</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses only a very limited range of structures with only rare use of subordinate clauses</li> <li>some structures are accurate but errors predominate, and punctuation is often faulty</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>does not adequately address any part of the task</li> <li>does not express a clear position</li> <li>presents few ideas, which are largely undeveloped or irrelevant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>does not organise ideas logically</li> <li>may use a very limited range of cohesive devices, and those used may not indicate a logical relationship between ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses only a very limited range of words and expressions with very limited control of word formation and/or spelling</li> <li>errors may severely distort the message</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attempts sentence forms but errors in grammar and punctuation predominate and distort the meaning</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>barely responds to the task</li> <li>does not express a position</li> <li>may attempt to present one or two ideas but there is no development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has very little control of organisational features</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses an extremely limited range of vocabulary; essentially no control of word formation and/or spelling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>cannot use sentence forms except in memorised phrases</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>answer is completely unrelated to the task</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fails to communicate any message</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can only use a few isolated words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>cannot use sentence forms at all</li> </ul>
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>does not attend</li> <li>does not attempt the task in any way</li> <li>writes a totally memorised response</li> </ul>			

## Appendix 6: Education reflective journals criteria used as an artefact from education practicum courses.

GRADING/MARKING CRITERIA	ACHIEVEMENT INDICATORS				
	F	D	C	B	A
	Achievement that does not meet requirements <i>Significantly below course requirements</i>	Achievement that minimally meets the course requirements	Achievement that satisfactorily meets the course requirements	Achievement that is significantly above the course requirements	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the course requirements
<b>GENERAL CRITERIA (1-10)</b>					
<b>Reflection on Practice</b>	Fails to reflect on wider educational matters and how these impact student learning	Attempts to reflect on some wider educational matters but does not necessarily draw the link between these and student learning	Sometimes reflects on some wider educational matters but does not necessarily draw the link between these and student learning	Reflects on some wider educational matters and is beginning to identify how these might impact student learning	Reflects on wider educational matters and consistently demonstrates how these impact student learning
	Fails to understand the importance of reflecting on student learning	Little reflection on student learning	Some reflection on student learning is evident, but it is quite vague and repetitive	Reflects on student learning	Reflects on student learning in a meaningful way
	Student fails to understand the importance of reflecting on own practice and/or display the ability to do so meaningfully	Little reflection on their own practice which leads to limited improvement of practice	Inconsistent and vague reflections on their own practice leading to little improvement of practice	Reflects on their own practice leading to improvement with some guidance and support	Consistently reflects on their own practice leading to improvements in a range of areas
				Consistently reflects on their own practice leading to improvements in a range of areas	Consistently reflects on their own practice leading drawing effectively in theory leading to habitual improvement

GRADING/MARKING CRITERIA		ACHIEVEMENT INDICATORS				
		F	D	C	B	A
	Achievement that does not meet requirements <i>Significantly below course requirements</i>	Achievement that minimally meets the course requirements	Achievement that satisfactorily meets the course requirements	Achievement that is significantly above the course requirements	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the course requirements	
WRITTEN LANGUAGE CRITERIA – APPLIED BACHELOR (11-13)						
Clarity and accuracy Clarity of message, accuracy of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation sentences	The whole text is unclear. Errors are numerous and cause significant misunderstanding.	Mostly unclear with patches of significant break down. Errors can cause significant misunderstanding and require numerous corrections.	Sometimes clear, with patches of confusion. Accuracy is inconsistent. Errors cause misunderstanding. Correction required.	Generally clear and accurate. Errors can cause misunderstanding in places. Still some correction required.	Clearly expressed, with only occasional errors that do not cause misunderstanding. Requiring a minimal amount of correction.	Clearly expressed throughout. Consistently accurate. Requiring a minimal amount of correction.
Organization Organization, structure and style	There is no evidence of style, structure or organization.	Significant inconsistencies in style, structure and/or organization.	Some inconsistencies in style and structure. Organization not fully logical.	Structure and style generally appropriate. Mostly logical organization.	Only occasional lapses in structure and style conventions. Main points are clear and logically organized.	Smooth flowing and logically structured and organized. Appropriate style throughout.

## Appendix 7: IELTS preparation course materials.

### Academic Writing

A guide to provide academic reports and essays



### Remember ...

- They also require you to turn your opinions into a clearly presented argument.
- They require you to make sure your sentences are as clear as possible because written language can be easily misunderstood.

### Step 1: Read the assignment task description carefully.

Why do you think it is important to read task description?

### Step 3: Plan and brainstorm

You should plan your report or essay by.....

- ✓ On the side of the page try to start planning your essay.
- ✓ Identify the main components such as introduction and other subheadings.
- ✓ Write down all the information that you think are strong enough to support your discussion and argument.



### Important terms to pay attention to:

- ✓ Analyze: To break the subject up into its main ideas, and evaluate them.
- ✓ Compare: To show the similarities and differences between two or more subjects.
- ✓ Criticize: To make your judgement about the views expressed and support with evidence.
- ✓ Describe: To give a detailed account of the characteristics of a subject.
- ✓ Discuss: To investigate and present the different aspects of a problem and come to some conclusion.
- ✓ Evaluate: To appraise or estimate the worth of something, to some extent an explained personal opinion.
- ✓ Examine: To inquire into, and consider a problem carefully.
- ✓ Explain: To account for a subject's character, causes, results, implications.

### Step 5: writing the essay/report

You must have the followings ....

- ✓ Different organized paragraphs.
- ✓ Avoid adding unnecessary decorations.
- ✓ Make use of headings and subheadings if needed
- ✓ Add subheading for significant discussed topics.



### Step 5: writing the essay/report

To write a paragraph you must...

- ✓ Each paragraph should contain linked ideas about one general ideas.
- ✓ No less than three sentences per paragraph.
- ✓ A sentence in each paragraph should be no longer than three lines.
- ✓ Make use of correct punctuations.
- ✓ Paragraphs should be arranged in a logical sequence.
- ✓ Make use of connectors and linking words.



### Step 5: writing the essay/report

Category	Connectors	
Highlighting a point	Importantly, ...	
	Indeed, ...	
	In fact, ...	
	More importantly, ...	
	Furthermore, ...	
	Moreover, ...	
Changing direction and creating comparisons	It is also important to highlight...	
	However, ...	In contrast, ...
	Conversely, ...	Nevertheless, ...
	On the contrary, ...	Unfortunately, ...
	Rather, ...	On one hand, ...
	On the other hand, ...	Compared to, ...
	In comparison, ...	Another perspective holds..



## Step 5: writing the essay/report

Category	Connectors
Adding another point	In addition, ... Further, ... Another point to consider is... Secondly, ... Thirdly, ... Also, ...
Adding a similar point	Similarly, ... Likewise, ... Again, ...
Summarizing	Finally, ... In conclusion, ... To summarise, ... In sum, ... The three main points are...
	Lastly, ... To conclude this... In summary, ... Overall, ...

## Step 5: writing the essay/report

Category	Connectors
Reasoning	, because .... Thus, ..... Hence, ... Subsequently, ... Accordingly, ... As a consequence, ...
Giving an example	, so.... Therefore, ... Consequently, ... As a result, ... As a corollary, ... To this end, ...
Introducing parallels	For instance, ... This can be illustrated by... For example, ... ...such as...
	Simultaneously, ... At the same time, ... Equally, ... Concurrently, ...

## Step 5: writing the essay/report

Try to use **more variety of academic vocabulary** or (synonyms and antonyms) related to the topic, such as:

- ✓ Consolidate, develop, improve, support.
- ✓ Observed, found out, noticed, noted.
- ✓ Encourage, prompt.
- ✓ Foster
- ✓ Motivate, engage, attract.
- ✓ Students, learners.





1. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages.
2. Do the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages?
3. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages and give your own opinion.



Three types of questions

### Question 1: Discuss the advantages and disadvantages.

1. Simply asks us to discuss the advantages and disadvantages.
2. It does not ask for our opinion.
3. Look at the advantages in one paragraph and the disadvantages in the other.



### Question 2: Do the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages?

1. Say if the advantages are stronger than the disadvantages.
2. The question is not asking you to talk about numbers, but comment on the overall weight of the advantages or disadvantages.
3. If you choose advantages then you will have to say why these are much stronger than the advantages and why the disadvantages don't hold much weight.
4. You would also have to make this clear in your thesis statement.

### Question 3: Discuss the advantages and disadvantages and give your own opinion.

1. It is more like an opinion essay and a discussion essay at the same time.
2. Your structure will reflect this by having a paragraph for advantages and disadvantages, but also having a clear position on the statement.

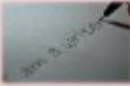





### Essay Structure

#### Worksheet Activity

- Look at the given article and compare structure of the three types.



<h2>Building Sentences</h2> 	<p>Look at different people's perspectives about what a sentence means?</p> <p><a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/topic/sentence-structure">http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/topic/sentence-structure</a></p>
<h2>What is a sentence?</h2> <p>A <b>sentence</b> is a group of words that makes sense on its own.</p> 	<p>The job of the sentence is to provide information that can be short or long.</p>   <p>A sentence is identified by a capital letter, punctuation, full stop, question mark or !.</p>
<h2>Specific features for sentence structure</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ A sentence always starts with a capital letter.</li> <li>✦ Can be ended with different punctuation according to the sentence type.</li> <li>✦ A sentence must be understood and readable.</li> <li>✦ The words must be in a correct order to clarify the meaning.</li> </ul> 	<h2>Examples</h2> <p>To the college.</p> <p>Mona went to the college.</p> <p>Which one is a sentence? Why?</p>
<h2>To create a sentence ....</h2> <p>Subject + Verb + extra info</p> <p>Extra information added depending on the type of the sentence.</p>	<h2>Activity 2</h2> <p>Complete the sentence</p> <p>Identify the mistakes</p>





What does each text consist of?

What is a paragraph?



### Texts and Paragraphs

- ✦ What is the main reason for having paragraphs?
- ✦ What do we mean by headings? What is the purpose for using them?
- ✦ Define a topic sentence and the use of it.
- ✦ Provide extra examples for the linking words.
- ✦ What is the main reason for using linking words?



Paragraphs help to organize the writing and enhance the text structure.

Paragraphs differ according to the text genre and type.

### A TOPIC SENTENCE

- ✓ Introduces the main idea of the paragraph in general.
- ✓ Informs the reader about what the writer is intending to do in the paragraph.
- ✓ Prepares the reader for the supporting evidences that the writing will provide to support the main idea.



How to structure a paragraph?

How to link between the paragraph?



### Looking at an example text

Read the given text and identify the followings:

- Main idea of the whole essay
- Number of paragraphs
- Linking words
- Words to indicate time
- Words to indicate a reason
- Showing contrast
- Giving examples
- Supporting ideas
- Topic sentences
- Conclusion



## Opinion Essays

### Typical Question Words:

- ❖ What is your opinion?
- ❖ Do you agree or disagree?
- ❖ To what extent do you agree or disagree?
- ❖ Direct question



### Example Question



Some people believe that wearing a school uniform is a must in all school, while others said that wearing school uniform is restricting students from being unique and fashionable.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

### Typical Question Words:




- ❖ What is your opinion?
- ❖ Do you agree or disagree?
- ❖ To what extent do you agree or disagree?
- ❖ Direct question

### Essay Structure

#### Introduction:-

- General introduction (paraphrase the question)
- Thesis statement (This essay agrees/disagrees that ....)



### Essay Structure

#### Introduction:-

Most students in both private and government schools are wearing the school uniform which is considered as part of school rules. However, in some schools outside the UAE, the students are allowed to not follow a specific uniform and wear what they prefer. It is argued that following a specific uniform may not allow students to feel comfortable as their regular clothing do. In this essay, I am going to discuss some points that disagree with the previous statement.

