Exploring Second Language Writing Steps and Strategies that EFL Students with Different Language Proficiency Levels Used in the Writing Process

استكشاف خطوات واستراتيجيات الكتابة باللغة الثانية لدى طلاب (الذين يتعلمون اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية) ذو مستويات مختلفة في إجادة اللغة وكيفية إستخدامها في عملية الكتابة

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ABDULLAH MOHMMED KHAMIS ALMOQBALI

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PHALANGCHOK WANPHET
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Abstract

L2 students actively and strategically engaged in their writing tasks. During the writing process the students interacted with various available resources. These resources are regarded as their learning goals and tools of knowledge acquisition. In this qualitative analytical study, the goals were mainly focusing on: a) identifying the writing steps that strong, medium, and weak student went through, b) describing the strategies that these three groups of students used in all steps identified in item (a) above.

The participants in this study were six students of intermediate level at an Omani University. Data collected in this study included observing through SnagIt and Stimulated-Recall. The findings show that there is a mismatch of writing process among these groups of students. In addition, there is a mismatch of writing strategies between these groups. The result shows that there is a great link between language proficiency, and writing steps and strategies. Good language learners know how to write step-by-step and use several writing strategies, which both can be evident in their writing process. The study also revealed that any lack in the writing steps and strategies can negatively influence the writing process of L2 participants. The findings corroborated the claim that L2 writing is a mediated activity that occurs during interactions between the language knowledge, writing steps, and strategies.

مستخلص

شارك طلاب اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية بكل همة من ناحية النشاط والاستراتيجيات في إكمال مهمة الكتابة. وأثناء هذه المهمة تفاعل هؤلاء الطلاب مع الموارد المختلفة المتوفرة لهم. وهذه الموارد هي بمثابة أهداف تعليمية وأدوات لكسب المعرفة. وفي هذه الدراسة التحليلية التي تعتمد على عامل النوعية تركزت الأهداف فيها أساساً على: 1) تحديد خطوات الكتابة التي قام بها الطلاب المصنفين بمستويات (قوي، متوسط وضعيف)،   2) وصف الاستراتيجيات التى اتبعها الطلاب بالتصنيفات المذكورة في كل الخطوات التي تم رصدها في البند 1 .

كان المشاركون في الدراسة هم ستة طلاب بالمستوى المتوسط في إحدى الجامعات العمانية. واشتملت البيانات التي تم جمعها في هذه الدراسة على أسلوب المراقبة من خلال برنامج SnagIt (سناق إت) و على طريقة تحفيز الذاكرة Stimulated-Recall . وتوضح النتائج بأن هناك عدم توافق في الإجراءات العملية المتبعة في الكتابة وذلك بين المجموعات المختلفة للطلاب وبحسب تصنيفاتهم (قوي، متوسط، ضعيف). وأيضا هناك عدم توافق في الإستراجيات المتبعة في الكتابة بين هذه المجموعات. فهناك رابط وثيق بين الخطوات المتبعة في الكتابة والاستراتيجيات المستخدمة فيها من جهة والكفاءة اللغوية العالمية من جهة أخرى . فالطلاب المتميزون في الكتابة ملمين بخطوات الكتابة والاستراجيات المتبعة فيها , وهذا كان واضحا في كتابتهم. وكشفت الدراسة بأنه في حالة وجود أي قصور في خطوات واستراتيجيات الكتابة فإن ذلك سينعكس بصورة سالبة على الإجراءات العملية التي يتبعها المشاركون في هذه الدراسة من طلاب اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية. إضافة لذلك، فإن نتائج الدراسة تدعم الحجة التي تقول بأن الكتابة بلغة أجنبية هي عبارة عن نشاط وسيط ويحدث أثناء التفاعل بين الخطوات المتبعة في الكتابة و الاستراتيجيات المستخدمة فيها.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

When Arabic students learn English, they usually encounter linguistic, educational and cultural challenges. In terms of linguistic obstacles, many students have trouble with syntax, spelling, grammar and vocabulary. Educational aspect is another challenge, particularly the teaching and learning differences between public and international schools. Even learners, who possess the necessary language skills, might be unfamiliar with the types of writing. To illustrate, in many secondary schools, students are required to write tasks emphasizing personal opinion such as defending a personal opinion or engaging in creative problem-solving. International students on the other hand, may find such types of writing confusing and unfamiliar. Furthermore, culture is another challenge that faces the students; it is usually found that the native culture affects second language writing in terms of, for instance, ideas and idea presentation in the written work. Therefore, the task of writing an interpretation or critique of reading might be difficult and unfamiliar, and learners may hesitate to make judgments if they have not explicitly been instructed to do so.

Learning to write is not just a matter of writing things down. It does not only require grammatical patterns but also many rules of writing such as high degree of organization in the development of information and ideas. Moreover, in order to produce a style which is appropriate to a subject matter, students need to choose the suitable vocabularies and sentence structure. Hedge (1998) who elaborates on the effective writing requirements, states that effective writing needs a number of things such as a high degree of development in the organization of ideas and the eventual readers.

Many of the studies by Rosen (1969), Hedge (1998) and Corder (1974) lead the writers to conclude that writing is the most difficult of the language abilities and skills to acquire (Corder 1974). Several researchers such as Rosen (1969) and Corder (1974) focus only on the written product, while many do not pay attention to their writing process. The focus of this study is to explore EFL learners' writing process, to see how high-achievers and low-achievers go though, and to identify their writing strategies in each writing step.

Since the emphasis of this study is the writing skill, it is important to provide an overview of the curriculum's content of each level. In elementary level, the main focus is on writing correctly formed sentences (i.e., sentence structure and construction). The second level is pre-intermediate in which the students write well planned paragraph about some familiar topics. In intermediate level, the major objective is to be able to write two types of essay: guided essay of around 150 words about two genres: process and graph, and a free essay of 180- 220 words about two genres; namely, compare and contrast, and cause and effect.

With regard to motivation of undertaking this study, the researcher has been involved in teaching English for more than five years in different places (the last one is Sohar University GFP). During this period, he taught all four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing which included academic writing as well), but the writing skill seems to be the most challenging skill among most GFP students. In fact, ESL and EFL students and the Arab world contexts face many challenges during their process of learning and acquisition of writing skill, let alone for the students in the Sultanate of Oman who enter the tertiary level as beginners. The second motive in this study is associated with a curiosity to explore the background and the conditions in which writing is learnt. Another factor in this study is that it will contribute to raising the standard of teaching and learning EFL writing in Sohar University GFP.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The writing difficulties have been investigated by many researchers such as: Rosen (1969), Hedge (1998) and Allen & Corder (1974), but the majority of relevant studies focused on the product rather than emphasis on the writing process. The purpose of this study is to examine the process of writing instead of the product in order to provide a profound understanding of the challenges and difficulties that EFL students face during their engagement in a writing process. The aims of this study is mainly undertaken to try to respond to the following main questions:

1.   What are the writing steps that strong, medium and weak students go through?
2.   What strategies that strong, medium and weak students used in the writing process?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The study is deemed to be important as its findings can be utilized to enhance and promote the writing skill among English students. As far as the students are concerned, when they internalize the writing process, steps and strategies, they will be able to produce logical and well written documents that transmit a suitable message for a specific professional and academic context. This study might facilitate to overcome many writing difficulties and challenges that students face when developing a piece of work. Turning to the teaching matter, it might raise the teachers' awareness of many grammatical aspects needed in teaching writing.

All in all, teachers and students should work collaboratively to develop and promote students' performance in this field. They should also review relevant resources and recent studies to obtain up to date information about strategies and methodologies in the domain of writing. Moreover, further investigation and studies about this issue might assist in providing a better insight and understanding of the context of teaching English as a foreign language.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Writing : Definition and Importance

2.1.1 Definition

In general, writing can be defined as the action of tracing or forming a character on paper or other appropriate materials with a pencil or pen. Turning to Linse (2005), writing is a combination of product and process. The process refers to the action of gathering and organizing ideas until they are provided in a manner that is polished and understandable to readers.

According to Linse (2005), Celce-Murcia & Olshtain (2000) identify writing skill as the performance of writing which result in a text, however, this text should be comprehensible. Furthermore, Huddelson (1989) states that writing skill is known as a process happens in the brain by which writers make meaning. In other words, it is producing of meaning from writers' intellectual and linguistic activity and resources instead of applying lists of words to produce copying of someone else's work or a piece of writing.

From the definitions above the researcher can conclude that writing is a way to produce language that comes from the thought. By writing, people can share their ideas, feeling or anything that exist in their mind. It is also a creative process that good writer must learn to communicate their ideas clearly to an unseen audience.

2.1.2 Importance of Writing

Ramelan (1992) states that writing is considered as a great tool of communication ideas, which is more fundamental and more usually used in daily life. Furthermore, writing can severe more functions than speaking. According to Rivers and Temperley (1978), writing can record what has been practiced orally, but speaking is disappeared immediately. Writing can be more organized and without mistakes by using revision and editing while speaking cannot be edited and revised. In terms of time, people might have enough time to think critically about the topic and practice it properly in writing, whereas there is no time to think about the topic while speaking.

2.2 Second Language Writing

2.2.1 Second Language Writing Process

Looking more closely at the writing process, Hedge (2005) provides a figure which illustrates various stages that are generally associated with the process approach such as editing, generating ideas and revision. However, writing is not considered as a linear process. According to the Raimes (1985), the process of composition usually includes going forth and back through the writing process. In fact, the process approach depends on the "recursive nature" as Smith (1982) mentioned, "writing is a recursive process and text is often moved around, modified, cut and expanded" (p. 17).

Despite its popularity, teaching writing is struggling with lack of comprehensive theories in writing instruction which provided confusion over understanding of what process exactly is and has made numerous arguments about writing instruction. According to Susser (1994), from the early twentieth century, process analysis began to appear in L1 composition literature. Since then, writing process has been frequently used for discussion of writing theories, writing pedagogies, and writing research.

Tompkins's five-stage approach was based on the seminal work of Graves. In turn, this work was later improved by Laksmi (2006):

Stage 1: Prewriting:

1.   Writing on topics based on the experience.

2.   Gathering and organizing ideas.

3.   Defining a topic sentence.

4.   Writing outline for the task.

Stage 2: Drafting

1.   Writing a rough draft.

2.   Emphasizing content rather than mechanics.

Stage 3: Revising

1.   Rereading the writing.

2.   Sharing the writing with teacher.

3.   Participate constructively in discussion about the writing with teacher.

4.   Making changes in compositions to reflect the reactions and comments of teacher.

5.   Making substantive rather than only minor changes.

Stage 4: editing

1.   Proofreading the writing.

2.   Identifying and correcting the mechanical mistakes.

Stage 5: publishing

1.   Making the final copy of the work.

2.   Publishing the writing in appropriate forms.

3.   Sharing the finished writing with the teacher.

Though writing specialists have settled that writers go through many steps while writing, they have not had agreement on labeling the steps and the strategies in each step. This section attempts to provide a depth look at each steps and strategies in each step.

2.2.1.1 Pre-writing

This step focuses on stimulating learners' creativity, how to approach the chosen topic and letting them think about what to write. In order to implement this step efficiently, Hedge (2005) states that teachers remind learners of two significant questions namely, 1) the objectives of the writing task and 2) its audiences. Therefore, students have to keep in mind the content of the text and intended readers while they making a global outline.

Brown (2001) and Kroll (2001) provide the following strategies and activities for the pre-writing step in order to provide more clear-cut guideline for the teachers:

1.   Brainstorming (spontaneous group discussion to provide ways and ides to solve problems, but it is only used in group work, so it does not belong to this study)

2.   Listing (it is simply a set of items in the same form of a list)

3.   Clustering (start with a key word, since then add other words used free connotation)

4.   Free-writing(it is a prewriting tool in which a student writes continuously for a set period of time without regard to grammar, spelling)

5.   Reading (Skimming (read quickly to obtain a general ideas) and/or scanning a passage (read for details)

6.   Outline (trace, draw a shape of something or define the outer edge)

Such activities allow students to begin their work informally and help them to generate ideas about a topic of their writing tasks. The first four strategies (brainstorming, clustering, free-writing and electing) are very commonly used in the classroom as they are easy to practice without requirement of materials and consuming much time. Although such strategies are similar, depending on students' performances, one student can achieve better effects than the others (Kroll 2001). According to Brown (2001), while students are given opportunities to practice such strategies, the main role of teacher is to encourage students to choose the suitable strategies for them. Others strategies which are widely used in the pre-writing are Skimming and scanning a passage related to a witting topic. Though the adoption of reading in writing classroom in controversy issue, it is clear that reading might facilitate writing, in particular ESL/EFL classroom (Kroll 2001).

2.2.1.2 Drafting

It is not tranquil for learners to move from step to step particularly from planning to actual writing. Yet, students have to transform plans into temporary text. In the drafting step, learners focus on getting idea on paper without worrying about mechanical and grammatical errors. In fact, students and instructors should not expect error-free early drafts (Fulwiler 1996). Since the surface problems (punctuation, wordiness, and spelling) might be dealt with in subsequent drafts, instructors have to concentrate on more global issues (organization, evidence, and topic) while ignoring surface problems. In general, the drafting step section is mostly concerned with first draft in which student transform the planning tactual work. Furthermore, drafting cannot be done in one step; students might write many times until they get their final drafts.

Putting one's initial thoughts about the topic on paper is an important stage of the first draft. However, organization, content and polishing what has been written are more important concerns in subsequent drafts. The subsequent drafts are influenced by instructors, peers' feedback, and

self-correction. Therefore, editing and revising are profoundly connected with subsequent drafts, and they will be discussed in upcoming sections.

2.2.1.3 Revising

In this step, students attempt to find ways to improve their writing through looking at their work from different points. Students should know that revision does not deal with correcting minor grammar errors but concentrating on organization and content of the whole work. According to Tompkins (1990), learners have opportunity to refine their writing during the revision step; "revision is not just polishing writing; it is meeting the needs of reads through adding, substituting, deleting, and rearranging material" (p. 83).

The importance of the revision step in the writing process is characterizing the revision process as the process of writing itself. In this step, writers polish their work through developing their ideas. Experienced writers are concerned with improving content and organization idea while less experienced writers concentrate on local grammatical errors and vocabulary. Thus, the role of teacher is to help students apply what experienced writers do in this step. Teacher should provide students with specific directions for revision; "through self-correction, peer-correction, and instructor initiated comments" (Brown 2001, p. 355).

2.2.1.4 Editing

In this step, learners proofread their own work to correct grammatical and mechanics errors. Tompkins (1990) defines editing as "putting piece of writing into its final form" (p. 88). Prior to this step, the learners do not concentrate on the grammar errors and mechanics but content. Turning to this step, on the other hand, learners eventually have time to clean up their work by the correction of spelling and local errors. In addition, editing checklist might play a great role in helping students to concentrate in specific points in the editing step, and it can be very depending on students' ability levels and needs. Regarding the level, varied grammatical issues might be focused on each time.

There are many points that the writer should check in the final draft such as the spelling, punctuation, handwriting, choice of word and grammar, the order in which the information is presented, and layout (Nolasco 1987). In this final stage, the student should read their work objectively checking for mechanical and grammatical errors.

2.2.1.5 Sharing

Usually the reader of the students' work is the teacher, but the students should be encouraged to write to other students and to genuine readers outside of the classroom. The general purpose of writing is classroom is to show what students know, but there is another important aims which is that writing classroom should seek genuine communication by written texts. To illustrate, having students share their completed writing with audiences such as families, friends, peers or even community might help to promote real communication between writer and reader in the writing process with the classroom (Tompkins 1990). This is because students can have real audience who could meaningfully response to their work and improve their confidence as author.

One of the most important ways to improve authenticity is to provide authenticity of writing for students (Brown 2001). Teachers have to motivate students to read each other's work and comments. Moreover, teacher should not only read learners' work to locate errors and give a grade but read for enjoyment and information.

2.2.2   Strategies in Second Language Writing
2.2.2.1 Definition

Writing strategy is a way and technique of controlling writing process to create well-organized production crystallized via high quality. The strategic writing is defined as a thinking procedure for controlling production (metacognition) or producing writing (cognition) (El-koumy 1991). As result, strategic writing is an association between cognitive and met- cognitive; that is to link thinking with knowledge. This strategy is cognitive and meta-cognitive procedure applied to solve problems while writing and control the production of written language. In order to be a strategic writer, the writer should be able to utilize variety of writing strategies in a

flexible way instead of being passive when creating a piece of writing. Strategic writing is the capability to adjust and monitor writing throughout writing process. According to El-koumy (1991), writer who is not strategic usually encounter difficulties in the writing skill. Moreover, strategic writing tools help writer to figure out his or her ideas in a strategic method. The strategy necessitates creating possibilities and conceives the future. A successful strategy is a mental discipline including of broad ranging, creative and flexible thinking.

2.2.2.2 The Second Language Writing Strategies

There are many studies in the field of L2 writing by Skibiniewski & Skibiniewska (1986); Kasper (1997); Sengupta (2000); Wolfersberger (2003) and Ferris (2013) that provide a positive association between the students' strategic awareness and the writing performance. Such studies showed clear picture of writing process components. However, instead of addressing the L2 writing from a comprehensive global perspective, they focused on individual aspects of the L2 writing process. Skibiniewski and Skibiniewska (1986)'s studyhas been pointed out that Polish EFL students who were aware of their writing goals and process produced better compositions. Turning to Kasper (1997), she looked into the metacognition and its influence on the writing proficiency among ESL college learners of diverse backgrounds in the United States. She stated that the improvement of metacognition was positively connected with the higher level of writing proficiency. In addition, she figured out that the strategic knowledge was an attribute of the successful students who understood that the writing objectives were communication.

Sengupta (2000) conducted experimental research with in the secondary school students in Hong Kong. It showed a positive influence of strategic revision instructions on the improvement of composition skills of the students. Wolfersberger (2003) examined the first language to second language writing strategy transfer and how the process varied between low and high proficiency Japanese college students in the United States. He concluded that when the task difficulty was very high for the low proficiency learners, they did not transfer the L1 writing strategy to the L2 writing. As result, he hypothesized that the training in compensation strategy was important to teach learners how to overwhelm the language barrier imposed via the task difficulty. In second language classroom, Ferries (2013) stated that the feedback had a positive

effect on the development of the English writing skills among international learners at one of the United States universities.

2.3 Challenges in Learning Writing in a Second Language

While students attempt to learn English, particularly the writing skill, they usually face a variety of challenges due to various numbers of factors. In fact, there are a lot of irregularization and idiosyncrasies in English language that make a myriad of challenges in writing skills for those students who learn English as a second language. There are some common challenges that should be taken into consideration:

2.3.1 Spelling: it is known as a skill of identifying a term in written mode. If the students spell incorrectly, it does not only represent a deviation from the standard but it adversely influences the intended meaning. Spelling is in relation to the decoding. Students who are struggling in spelling are required to memorize spellings of heavily utilized, irregular items, such as "knife", etc. Since the English language has irregularities in spelling and there is no connection between symbols and sound, it is necessary to memorize each item as a separate entity.

2.3.2 Punctuation: If the students want to convey the message properly, it is important to use the punctuation marks correctly. According to Davidson (2007), punctuation plays a valid role in clarifying what people intend to write. Students often commit mistakes in using, full stops, colons, commas and semicolons, which have a great influence in the communication process. One of the most common challenges regarding punctuation is the misuse of the capital letters that is not derived from the first language interference. In fact capitalization is one of the results of inefficient teaching or inadequate learning.

2.3.3 Grammar: Grammar is considered as the most challenging aspect for the second language learners' writers. Students usually face a variety of challenges in the use of proper sentence structure, creating a coherent form and paragraph development. Leisak (1989) states that the grammar area consists of fragments and verbiage, use of different types of sentences run-on sentences , inclusion of necessary information, subject-verb agreement, and tense agreement, placement of modifiers and parallel construction. Generally students do not face challenge in applying of how to build tense, yet, they confuse when they attempt to write expressions. Indeed, students usually find combing two complete sentences is a challenging task for them.

2.3.4 Vocabulary: Lack of vocabulary is another challenge that second language learners face. It makes writing ineffective and boring. Generally vocabulary is categorized into two parts: 1) active vocabulary which is learnt for production and 2) passive vocabulary which is applied only for recognition. Miller (1984) states that students usually struggle in possible word combinations, the productions part that is connected with meaning (general and specific) structures and form (spelling and pronunciation).

2.3.5 Coherence and Cohesion: Coherence and cohesion are also challenges that second language learners usually struggle with. Coherence simply is known as the rhetorical parts of the writing including supporting and developing the ideas. It is "the mutual access and relevance within a configuration of concepts and relations", (Beaugrande & Dressler 1996, pp. 84-112). On the other hand, the cohesion emphasizes the grammatical aspects. Unfortunately, many students face obstacles in linking the ideas logically with proper structure in a piece of writing. According to Bex (1996) coherence and cohesion share the role of the process one sentences to the next sentences.

Incorrect spelling, a poor grasp of grammatical structures, lack of vocabulary, the incorrect of punctuation marks, illogical sequence and poor paragraph are the most common challenges that the second language learners usually have while learning writing skill in the English language. In fact, such challenges not influence the students' academic success, but also hinder their professional progress in the development of their writing skills.

2.4. Issues in Second Language Writing

2.4.1 Students' Self-Correction and Error Learning Strategies

Edge (1989) states that the self-correction is considered as one of the best correction forms. The reason behind this is that people often prefer to sort out their errors themselves instead of being corrected by others- this is true not for language learning only. According to Brumfit (1980), there are number of advantages in learners' correcting their own writing after they have undergone several steps in doing so. Firstly, looking for mistakes in other learners' work enhances the students to pinpoint mistakes in their own writing more easily. Also it could support the students to find out that something they have considered correct until then might be proved to be correct. The second point is that doing the correction immediately after the written

work can provide more expressive learning since the materials studied are still fresh in the students' minds. The last issue is pair or group discussion might also contribute to learners oral fluency practice as they talk over the mistakes and attempt to reach a consensus among them.

2.4.2 Relationship between Reading and Writing

Studies of first language acquisition have shown solid relationship between writing and reading capabilities, i.e., good writers tend to be good readers and good readers tend to be good writers (Kucer 1987; Flood & Lapp1987; Belanger 1987; Stotsky 1983). In addition, these studies have identified some common cognitive processes or structural components underlying writing and reading so much so which improvement and instruction in one skill can enhance abilities in the other.

Another study which conducted by Carson (1990) who examines whether or not writing and reading relationship are closely related in first and second language contexts. Such results state that the interaction between writing and reading is complicated, with certain phases of each skill being independent of the other. There are many arguments that assume that writing affects reading, that reading affects writing and they interactively influence each other (Carson 1990) she states that writing and reading are likely to affect each other reciprocally but not as inverses of the same process. In fact, writing and reading changes at different stages of language aspects and development of this relationship will be independent of each other (Shanahan & Lomax, 1986). According to Krashen (1984), increasing reading has mostly been seen to be more effective in producing obtains in writing than growing writing frequency.

2.5 Conclusion

All the previous research studies presented here have contributed to determine fundamental issues within the second language writing field and specifically in relation to the writing steps and strategies. There is an intrinsic connection between applying writing steps and strategies, and the language proficiency. This study attempts to investigate second language writing steps and strategies that EFL students with different language proficiency levels used in the writing process.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter attempts to provide information about the background of the study as well as the methodology used in its process.

3.1. Aims and Research Questions

The study is intended to examine the use of the writing process steps and strategies applied by weak, medium and strong English students when composing a specific text type (i.e., an essay). During this phase, the actions directly related to the process of constructing such type of text will be considered. As such, the two following research questions are addressed in the course of this study:

1- What are the writing steps that strong, medium and weak EFL students go through?
2- What are the strategies that strong, medium and weak EFL students used in each of the steps mentioned in Question 1?

This study provides valuable information to assist students to be aware of the steps and strategies used to improve their skills in writing and to develop their overall writing performance. Through the information provided in this study the ESL teachers will be able to identify the role of individual differences

3.2. Data and Tools

3.2.1. Writing Task

The participants are asked to perform an essay writing task. They are given forty-five minutes to complete the task. The word limit for the task is 150 to 180 words, which is the required length for writing of their assignments and essays on tests. Even though instructions for the task are incorporated in writing in the task document the researcher however provided the instructions orally to ensure that the participants are fully aware of the task requirements. The task asks them to compose their view of what advantages and disadvantages of using phones in the classroom.

This writing task is chosen mainly for two considerations. The first consideration is the cognitive demands set by the task. Some researchers such as Durst (1987), Koda (1993), Leki (1996), and Matsuhashi (1981), believe that the description of a personal experience would be less demanding and complex than other tasks. It is hypothesized that task is fluctuating in purposes, rhetorical structure and cognitive complexity which would require the use of different

writing strategies. Another consideration is the participants' familiarity with the task. Manchos, Murphy and Laries (2005), state that the familiarity with the topic might enhance participants' ability to be actively involved in the task. The task is administered in a quiet computer lab room, free from any distractions so that the students can concentrate on the task.

3.2.2 Observations through SnagIt

Participant observation is considered as one of the primary qualitative tools for data collection (Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein 2006; Goetz & Le Compte 1984). The role of the observer is to analyze and describe each single detail of the process that the participants followed. The way that the researchers accomplish the task and the time for them to carefully observe will affect their data; what you see depends on how you look (Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein 2006). Therefore, any researcher needs to develop a trigger to identify when, where and what to observe.

As a main tool for organizing data in this research, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software program called *SnagIt* is used. *SnagIt* is a program that could record the screen of the computer. The *SnagIt* program is installed in six computers in the computer lab at Sohar University. This program encourages the researcher to be efficient and well-organized. The flexibility associated with the use of such program will facilitate the retrieval data chunks that are needed to be examined. Additionally, the computerized speed allows the researcher to manipulate the data, storing and trying out hunches to a much greater degree than manually possible", and such programs "also provide clear audit trails that may be seen as contributing to the trustworthiness of the analysis" (Glesne 2011, p. 206). In addition, the participants are able to use soft or hard dictionary, pens, paper and raiser if needed.

As all the writing tasks recorded, the researcher has the opportunity to go over the process and cautiously observe the participants.

3.2.3 Stimulated Recall

According to Bloom (1953), "the subject may be enabled to relive an original situation with vividness and accuracy if he is presented with a large number of the cues or stimuli which occurred during the original situation" (p.161). Gass and Mackey (2000), state that the methodological background of the stimulated recall could be defined by introspective methods. Introspection depends on the assumption that the participants can observe their internal processes in the same way as it is possible to observe the external real world events. Moreover, the participants have access to their internal though processes and can verbalize such process. The purpose of the stimulated recall is to obtain additional information about the steps and strategies that the students use during the process of their task completion. This method is conducted immediately after the writing task has been completed. The time span between conducting recalling thoughts and the writing task was as short as it could be without a need to interrupt the execution of the writing task.

There is no guide for the stimulated recalled. The questions were specifically formulated using the information obtained from the SnagIt recordings. In addition to this, a supplementary question from the list below was posed.

1- Why did you act in this way? The question is intended to elicit both thoughts that occurred at the moment and new thoughts about the use of steps and strategies or additional information about the metacognitive processes of the participants.

2- Did any other options come into your mind? Generally, the aim of this question is to identify the steps and strategies used as well as the conscious options taken automatically by the students as they were going through the writing of the task.

3- What did you think in that time? This question is aimed to elicit verbalization of solely thoughts that happened at the moment of doing the writing task.

The participants were asked such questions soon after completion of the writing task, around ten minutes. After they have finished their tasks, they were asked to wait until the researcher has checked their work. Then, the researcher asked them individually to sit in the same place where they did the writing task and asked them some question based on their work.

3.3. Participants

The presented study consists of six participants (male= 6) who are intermediate (level three) students at Sohar University in the Sultanate Oman. Such participants are chosen according to their grades from the previous courses. All the participants are aged 20-35. When the study begins, the six participants have completed the same two levels; elementary and pre-intermediate. Students A and students B, are considered as low achievers, student C and student D as medium achievers, students E and student F as high achievers. Students A and B, though regarded as highly motivated and hardworking students, are selected as low achievers because of their poor performance in the writing skill. Student A was among the few who failed to obtain a pass grade in the writing skill.

3.4 Setting

This study was conducted at Sohar University, in the General Foundation Programme Department (GFP). There are four major aspects of academic competence; namely, Study Skills, Mathematics, Computing and English. This study focuses on English subject that comprises three levels: Elementary, Pre-Intermediate and Intermediate. Six participants who reached Intermediate level have been selected to investigate the topic. One of the Computing Laboratories has been used to conduct the experiment.

3.5. Research Tool and Procedures

This study is undertaken by a qualitative ethnographic research approach. This approach is known as "spending long periods watching people, coupled with talking to them about what they are doing, thinking and saying, and designed to see how they understand their world" (Delamont 2006, p. 206). The purpose of the following parts is to illustrate the methodology that has been used to examine this study.

3.5.1. Pilot Study (pre-exercise)

A pre- exercise is done to familiarize the participants on the study and to give them a better insight into the phenomenon. Moreover, a pilot study guarantees that mistakes can be remedied at little cost.

The pilot study is conducted with two participants who meet the selection standards (See appendix 1). The observation is recorded to guarantee that students familiarize themselves with the computer and task. According to the time, only 30 minutes were given for students to complete the task, but it has been found that the time was insufficient to complete the task. Therefore, it has been changed to 45 minutes. The second point is that the instructions were orally and briefly given for the students, but not all the students fully understand the task. Hence, written and verbal instructions were given to the students in order to ensure that all students understand the task before they start.

3.5.2. Procedure

The first step is that participants are required to write an essay using computers which have SnagIt program to record all the process of their work. Although the task that is required to be completed by the participants is limited in terms of the number of words and the allocated time, the participants however may use any supportive tools such as internet and computer's programs. After the participants have completed their work, they are required to carry out stimulated recall with the researcher. In such individual stimulated recalls, the participants have a very informal conversation and they have the chance to read and watch their writing process.

3.5.3 Checklist Writing Process

Since this study is conducted by observation method, there is a checklist which includes specific steps of writing process used to collect the data. Graves' five-stages (Adapted from Laksmi 2006), and combined with Tribbles 1996 are used to form the checklist (See appendix 2). Based on this checklist the data is collected and categorized.

3.6 Analytical Considerations

This section attempts to provide a clear view of the three considerations namely, reliability, validity and ethical considerations.

3.6.1 Reliability

When considering that the methodology used in the study would produce consistent results then these results are regarded as reliable. The reliability seems to be high. As such, it is expected to yield qualitative results that are reflected in the writing performance of the participants. However, the consistency of results in the study can be observed in the performance of the different participants. If this test was administered for another group of participants, their results would be similar or close to that of the first group. Moreover, the research instrument was an essay question from the level 3 final examination. There was an expectation that the students would attempt their best in the final examination, as they would be motivated to pass and proceed to their respective faculty. ESL writing examination questions always require the same writing skills although the essay topic might differ.

3.6.2 Validity

The validity of this study is based on the genuineness of its findings. That is because the procedures used in the research will measure what they are supposed to. Therefore, the study is deemed to be highly valid. In addition, there are two factors that support this validity; one factor is that the students have a good background about the topic of the study. The second factor is that the students wrote about their own experiences in their everyday lives.

3.6.3 Ethical Considerations

The researcher followed a code of ethics and behaved in such a way as to not be intrusive in the participants' lives, keeping in mind that qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world (Stake, 2000, p. 447). The participants' privacy and confidentiality were protected and respected by using informed consent, pseudonyms, and through other negotiation

processes. Researching one's own students is an ethical issue as a well as a complex variable in the research process, and maintaining an ethical stance in this regard was an ongoing priority for him throughout this study.

Chapter Four: Results

The previous chapter includes details about the participants, research tools and research questions used in the study. This chapter is intended to provide the results of both methods used for obtaining the relevant data; namely, observation through SnagIt and stimulated recall. The following sections attempt to summarize fundamental information about: 1) the writing steps followed by the participants with different levels of language proficiency, 2) the strategies that weak, medium and strong students used in the writing task and, 3) stimulated recalled.

4.1. Writing Steps and Participants with Different Levels of Language Proficiency

SnagIt is used to record the steps and strategies that six participants applied during their writing. The aim of this section is to identify the steps that weak, medium and strong students used. In this regard, table 1 contains an illustration of the major steps that the students followed as they were completing their writing tasks:

Composition Steps	Weak Achievers		Medium Achievers		Strong Achievers	
	A	B	C	D	E	F
1. Analyze the topic	√	×	√	×	√	√
2. Brainstorm[1]	×	×	×	×	×	×
3. Preliminary plan	×	×	×	×	√	√
4. Reading on the topic	√	×	√	×	√	√
5. Reflect, evaluate and refine the plan	×	×	×	×	√	×
6. First draft	√	√	√	√	√	√
7. Additional reading	×	×	√	×	√	√
8. Revising	√(during the writing task)	√ (during the writing task)	√ (during the writing task and after	√ (during the writing task)	√ (during the writing task and after	√ (during the writing task and after

[1] It is only used in group work, so it does not belong to this study.

			completing)		completing)	completing)

Table 1 Steps used in the writing process

As shown in the Table 1, with the exception of 'brainstorm the topic', all of the steps were followed by all students. At the first glance, four of the participants; A, C, E, and F utilized the first step 'analyze the topic', while students E and F from good achievers were the only participants who applied the third step, 'preliminary plan'. Turning to the researching about the topic, considerably more than half of participates, i.e., A, C, E, and F, have read about the topic to obtain some general ideas about it and decide on their writing process. Student E who is considered high achiever employed all the steps. Writing the first draft is one of the two stages that have been applied by all of the participants. According to the additional reading, this step has been used by C, E and F whereas the half of the others did not apply it. Another step that has been used in the writing process is the revising. All the students revised their work before they finished but they can be divided into two categories. The first category, A, B and D, revised only while they were writing the task, on the other hand, the other category revised during the writing task as well as after they have finished the whole work. This is the same case with the editing step, the same group, with exception of the weak student A who did not finish his work, edited their work during the writing, but the second group edited their work tow time, during their work and before their submit their work.

Since participants went through variety of steps, they applied different strategies. The next section attempts to cover the orders of writing steps that have been followed by each participant.

4.2 Order of Writing Steps and Participants with Different Levels of Language Proficiency

As students varied in their thinking and abilities, this is also reflected in the order of the steps that they followed. This table attempts to provide a clear picture about variation in the order of the steps that the students followed to complete their tasks.

| | Weak Achievers | | Medium Achievers | | Strong Achievers |
A	B	C	D	E	F
Analyze the topic	First draft	Analyze the topic	First draft	Analyze the topic	Analyze the topic
Reading on the topic	Revising (during the writing task)	Reading on the topic	Revising (during the writing task)	Preliminary plan	Preliminary plan
First draft	Editing (during the writing task)	First draft	Editing (during the writing task)	Reading on the topic	Reading on the topic
Revising		Additional reading		First draft	Reflect, evaluate and refine the plan
		Revising (during the writing task and after completing)		Additional reading	First draft
		Editing (during the writing task and after completing)		Revising (during the writing task and after completing)	Additional reading
				Editing (during the writing task and after completing)	Revising (during the writing task and after completing)
					Editing (during the writing task and after completing)

Table 2 the different order steps of the participants

Table 2 depicts the results of the steps order that students follow, weak, medium and strong students. To begin with, student A started his work with analyzing the question as it can be seen in the picture below.
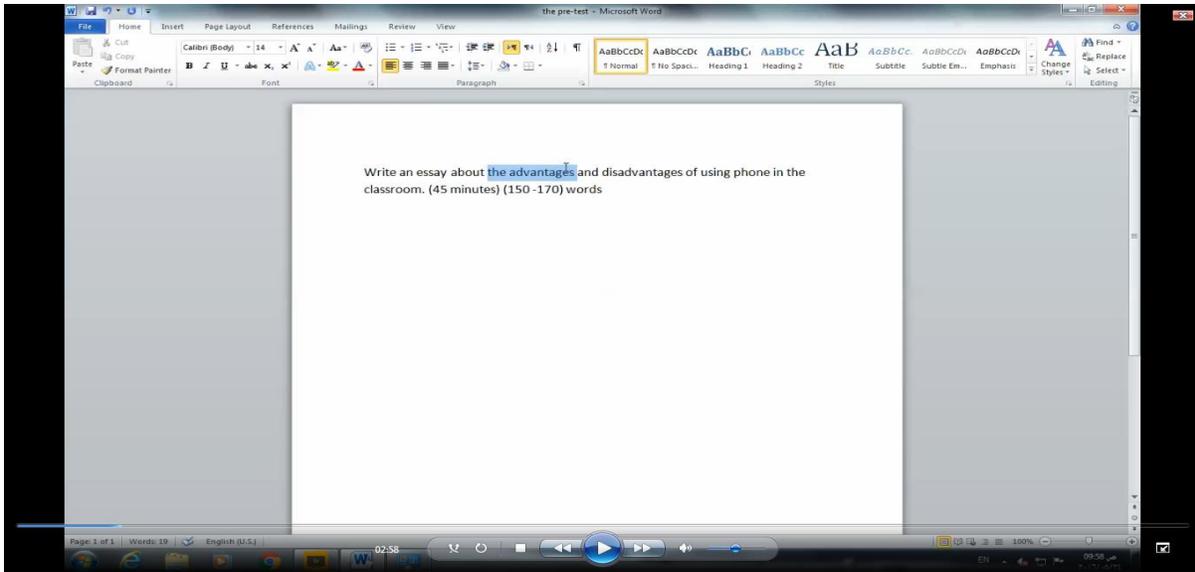
Figure 1: Analyzing the Questions

In the next figure, it seems that he went to the second step "read about the topic". He opened Google website and searched about the topic in Arabic. He attempted to read about the topic in different websites.
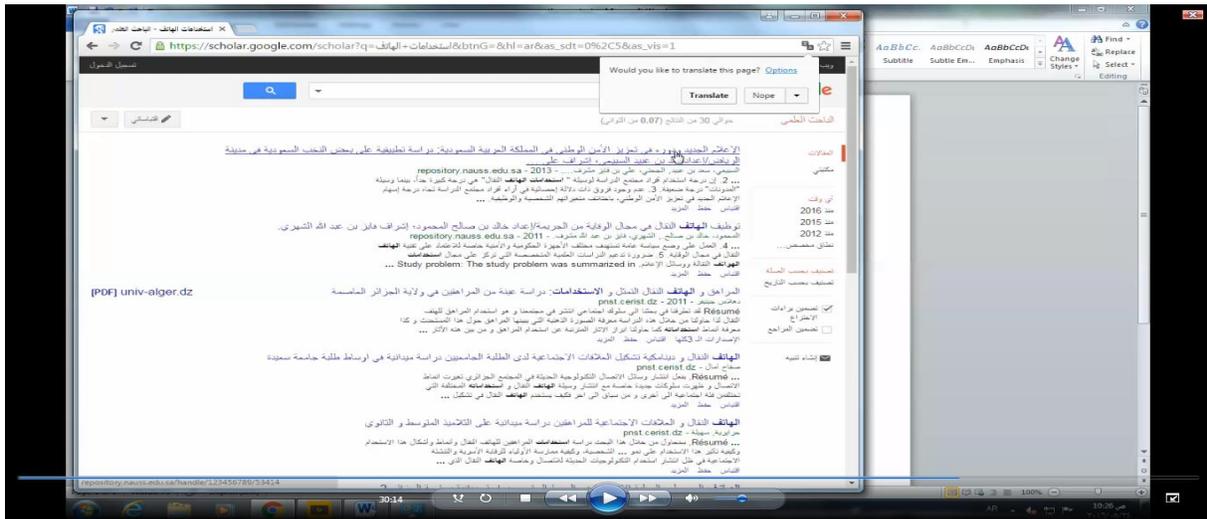
Figure 2: Reading about the Topic

This was followed by writing the first draft and did some revisions before he stopped writing. He started with the introduction and the writing of general sentences about the topic. Thereafter, he moved to the first paragraph in the body followed by the second paragraph. Finally, he concluded his work by writing the conclusion.
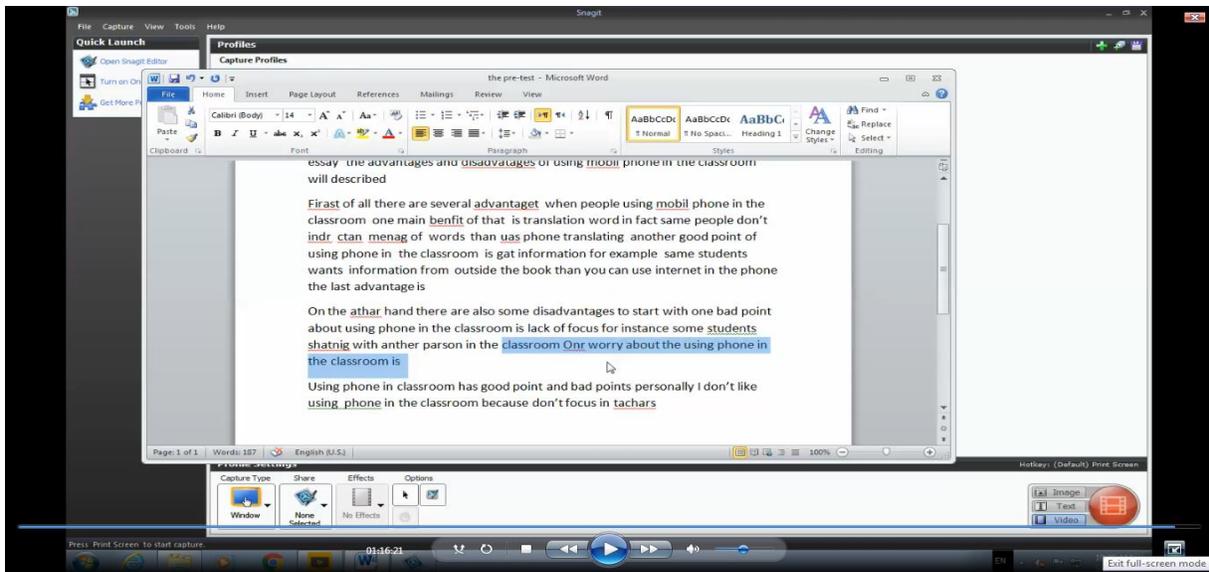
Figure 3: First Draft

On the other hand, as shown in the figure, the second student, student B, didn't show that he spent time in analyzing the question, he directly wrote the first draft. He began with the introduction. Then, he moved to the body and conclusion.
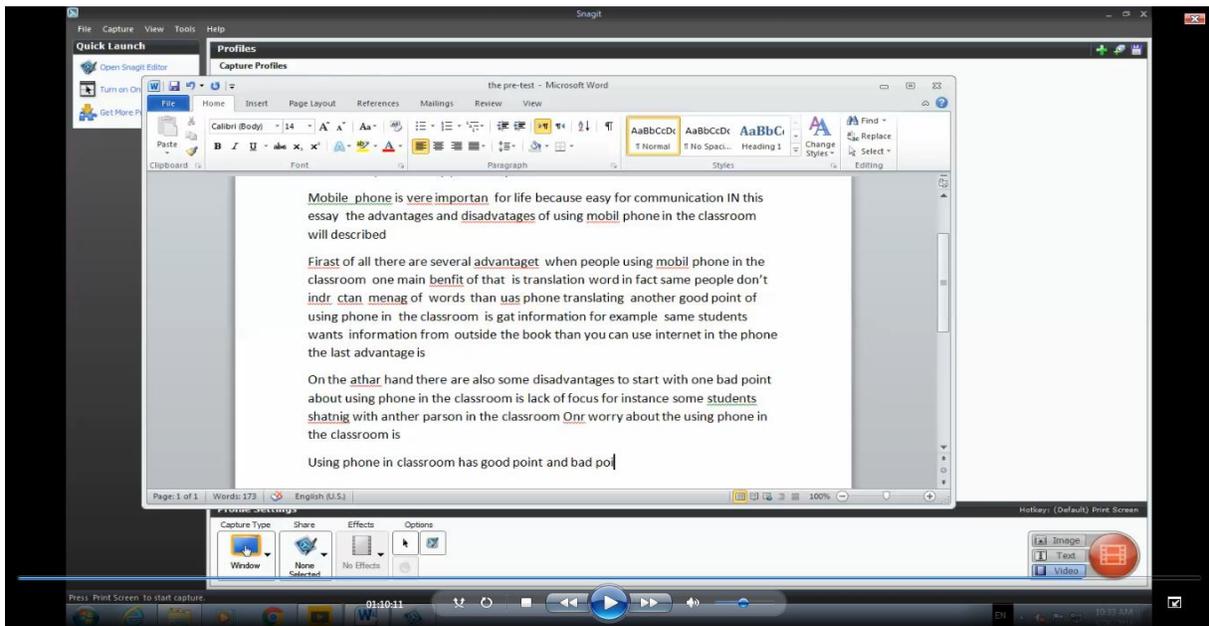
Figure 4: First Draft

Also, the figure shows that he did some revisions and editing during the process of the writing task. He did use steps during his work but he did not apply these steps before he finished his work.
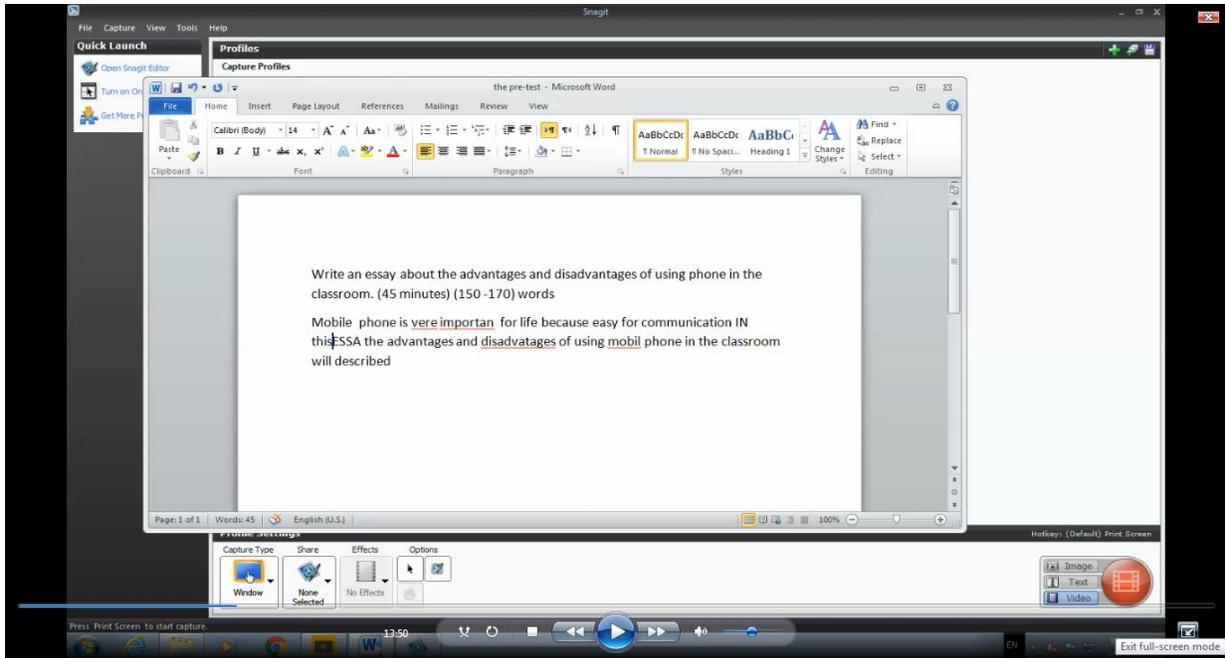
Figure 5: Revising and Editing

Looking more closely at the trend of the second group, medium students, and the table proves that while they follow similar steps that the weak students applied in their work, they are some differences between C and D students. Students C is more organized than student D as he used seven steps whereas student D used only three steps. The student C started his working with analyzing the topic.
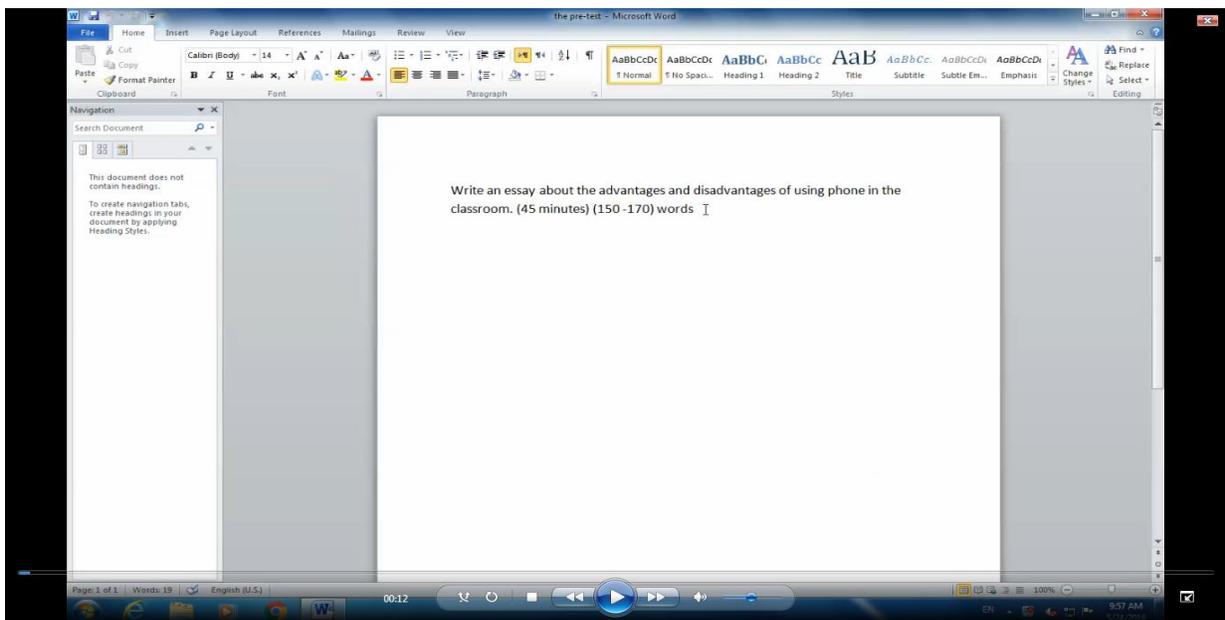
Figure 6: Analyzing the Topic

The picture below shows that the participant attempted to search and read about his topic. He focused on the issues that he would discuss in his work. He opened the Google website and figured out different websites where he could find his needs.
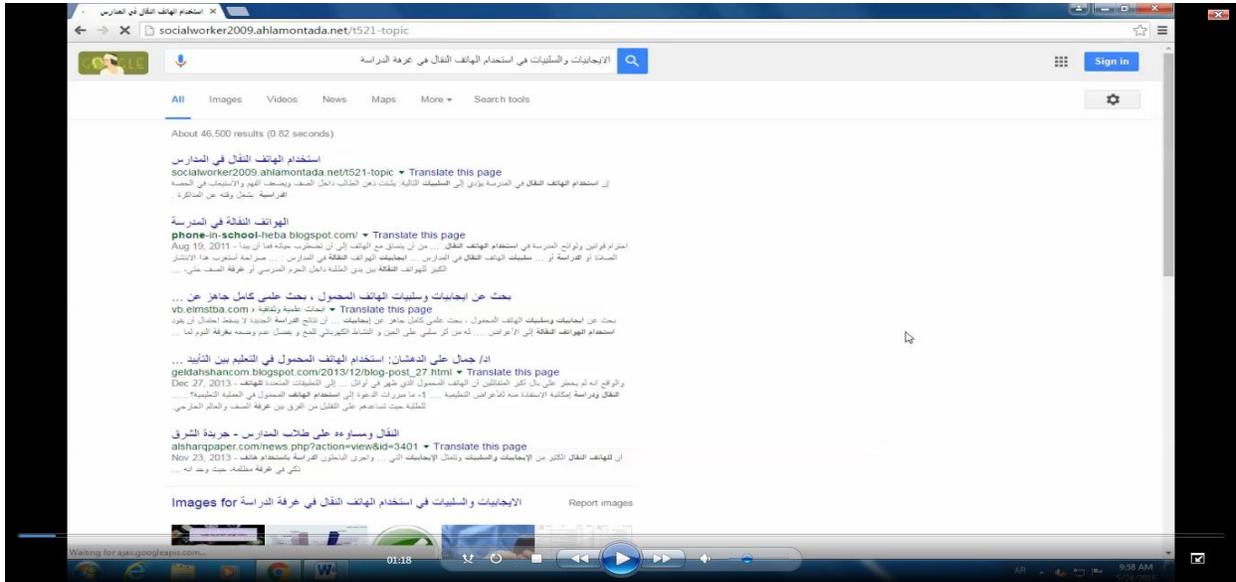
Figure 7: Reaching and Reading about the Topic

He wrote his first draft which was followed by revising and editing during doing the work. He started with introduction and then he wrote the body which consists of two paragraphs. Then, he wrote the conclusion in which he provided his opinion about the issue.
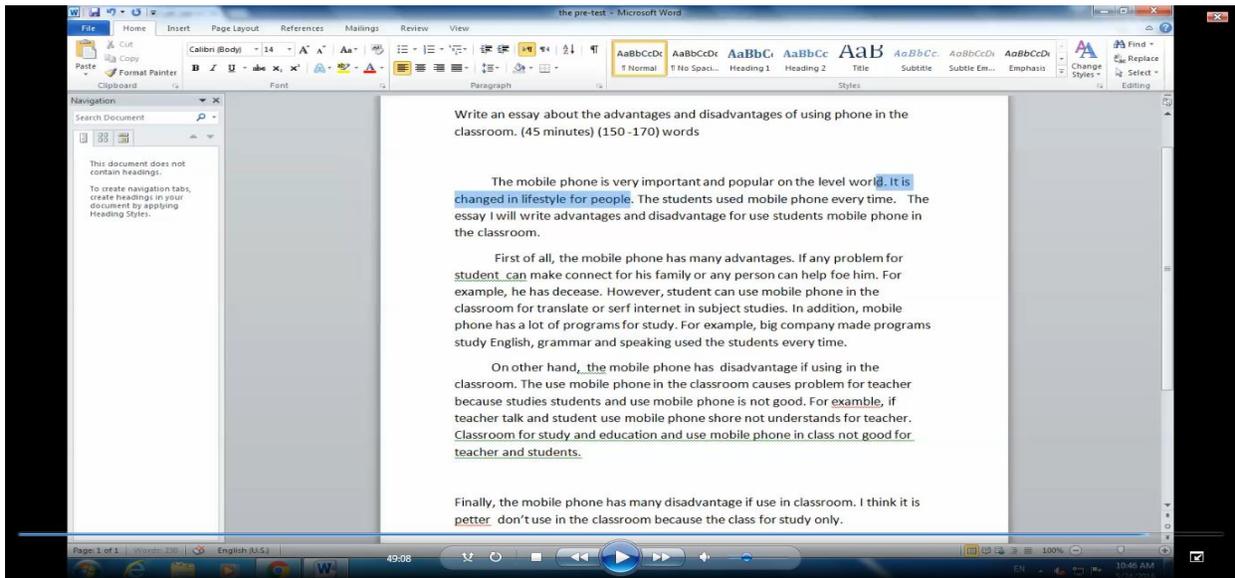
Figure 8: First Draft

One other side, the student D started directly in writing the first draft and doing some revisions and editing only while he was writing the task. He attempted to revise each point before he moved to the next step. In addition, all his worked has been cleaned during the writing.
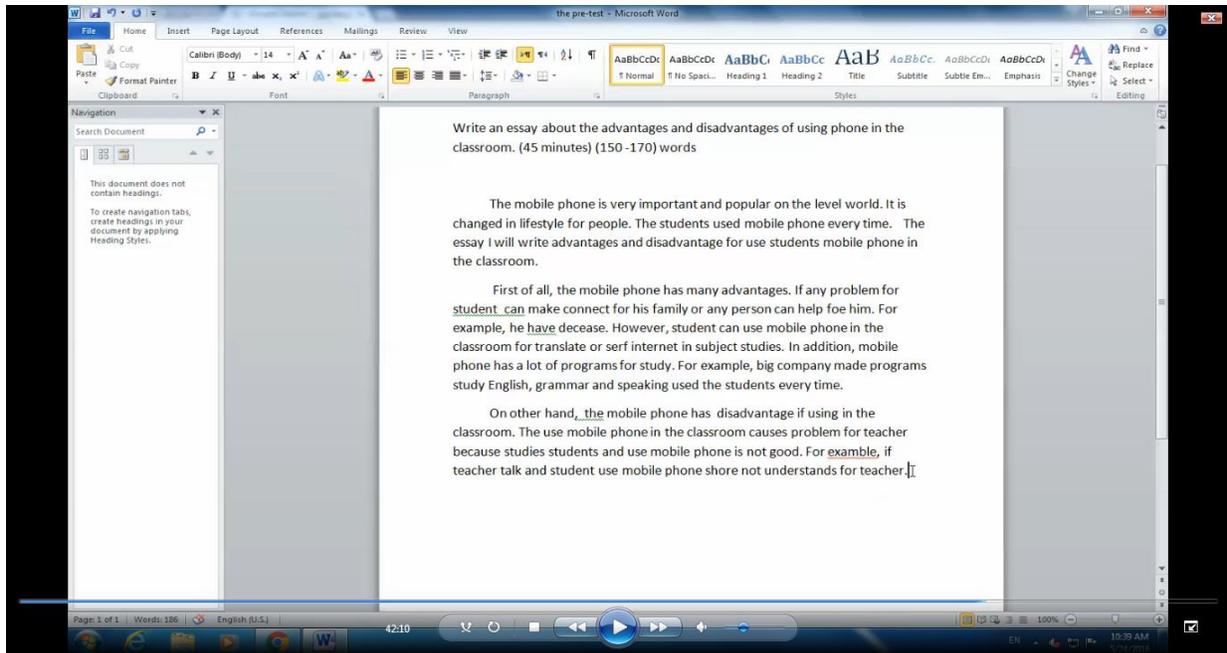
Figure 9: Cleaning the Work

Turning to that group, strong students, the table experienced that they used some more steps than other groups. In fact, both student E and F followed the same steps with the exceptions of refining the second plan. They started with analyzing the question just like others but they made a preliminary plan before they started reading about the topic.
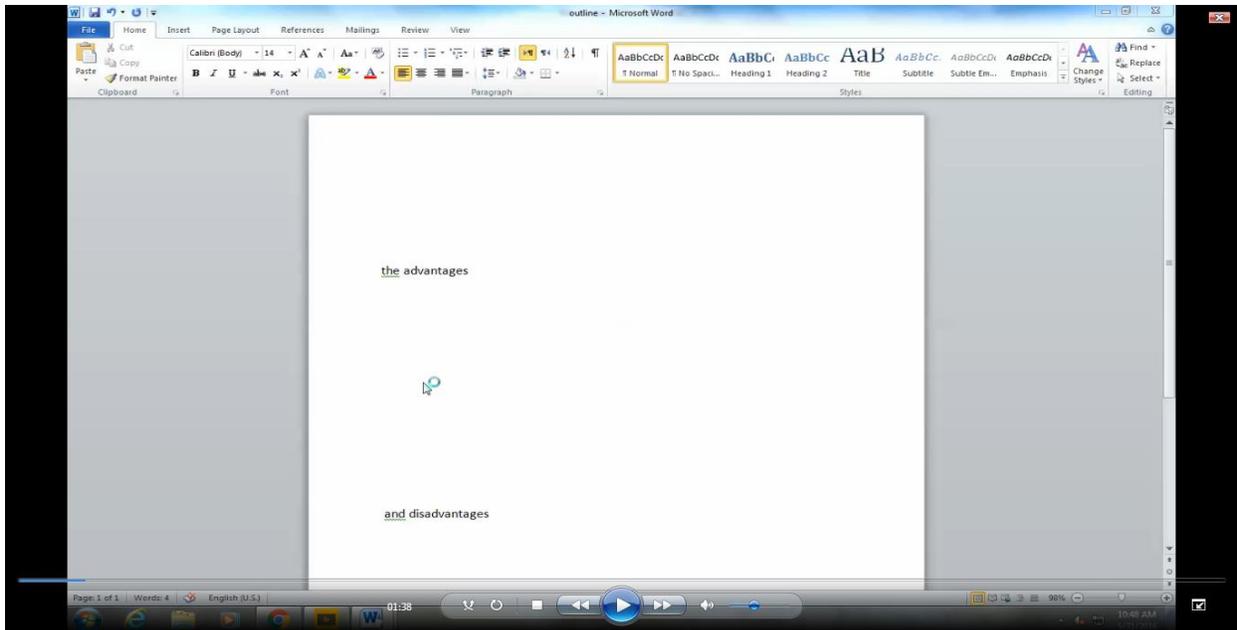
Figure 10: Preliminary Plan

After this step, student E went directly to write the first draft while student F evaluated and refined his plan. As it is shown in the below figure, student F attempted to evaluated and organized his plan as it might help his in doing his work.
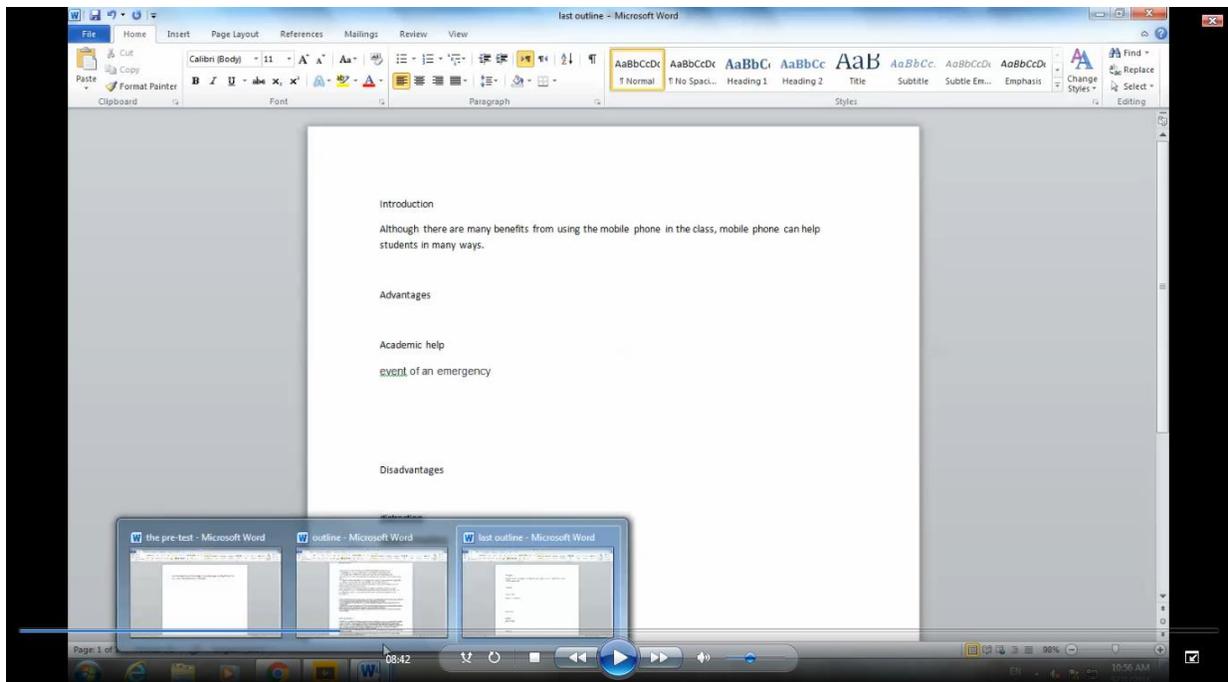
Figure 11: Reflect, Evaluate and Refine the Plan

After that, additional reading, revision and editing had been used by two both students. Before they finished their work, they went again to read about the topic and added some evidences and example to enhance their point. Then, a careful revision and editing were applied in order to avoid any flaws.
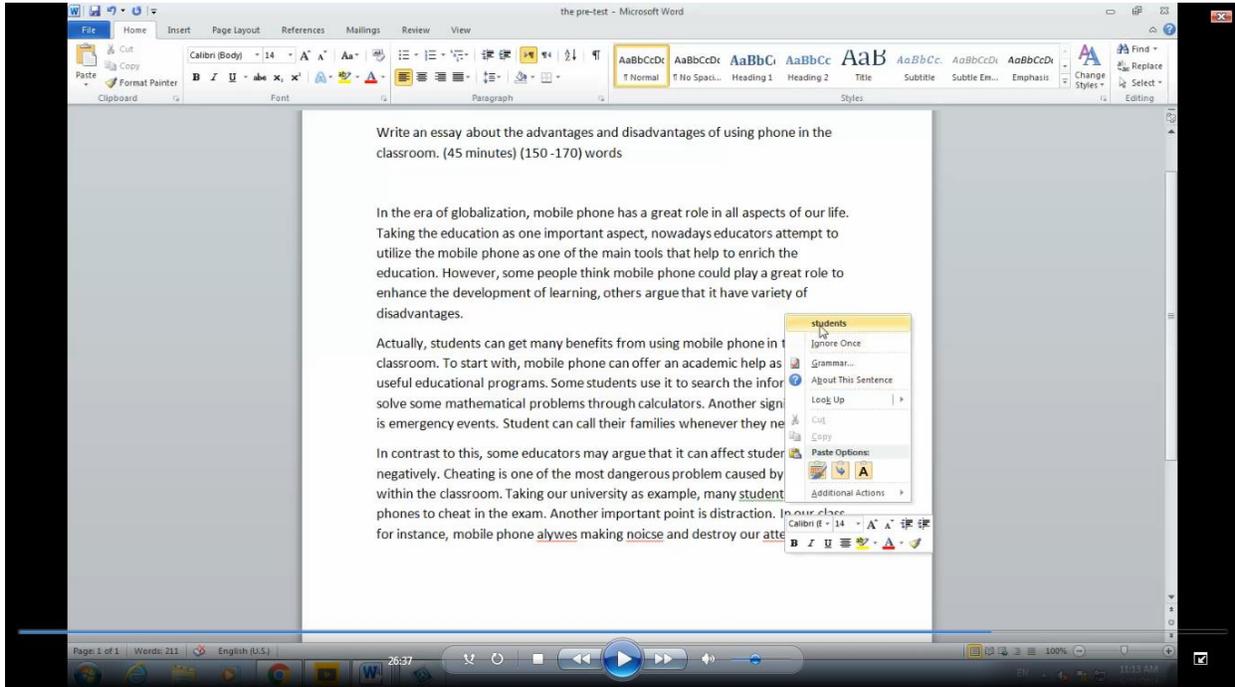
Figure 12: Revision and Editing

To sum up, according to the data collection above, it is true that many students followed similar order steps, but there are some different order steps followed by other students. In general some groups applied mostly similar steps such as a strong achiever whereas others seem to be varied in their applying the steps. Next section illustrates the strategies have been used in each steps.

4.3 Strategies Employed by Each Participant

While the participants were doing the writing task, they applied variety of strategies to achieve their goals. Such strategies are shown in the following table.

Stages	Weak Achievers		Medium Achievers		Strong Achievers	
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Analyze the topic	Highlighting the key words.		Working on the question and identifying key ideas		1-Breaking up the question 2-working on the question highlighting the key words.	working on the question and identifying key ideas, issues & information that should be used in the essay
Brainstorm the topic						
Preliminary plan					1-Creating an outline. 2-Identifying the pros and cons	1-Creating an outline that a visual aid for organization. 2-(Storyboards) Illustrating details that can elicit elaboration for the written task 3-puting the content into an order & drawing an essay structure 4- mapping out the main sections of the essay 5-identifing pros and cons 6- Breaking the essay into 4 sections – deciding which will belong

Reading on the topic	1-Using the internet to get any basic/background information that he needs. First, he attempts to search in English. 2- searching for ideas and evidence to support points but in his first language(Arabic)		1-Using the internet to get any basic/background information that he needs. In his first language (Arabic)		1-Next, each section is developed a bit further. Possible topics for paragraphs are sketched in, and a note of where research evidence is needed though using the internet to get any basic/background information that he need 2-Finding out as much as possible about the topic to produce a fully elaborated, polished piece of writing. 3- Some of the reading involves more skimming and scanning, sometimes he read quickly and sometimes slowly. 4- searching for ideas and evidence to support points 5- Avoid reading through whole books and chapters; Instead, use the rough plan as a guide and search for relevant paragraphs. 6- Highlighting and make notes of things that help to answer the question. 7- copying the notes in the outline page	1-Next, each section is developed a bit further. Possible topics for paragraphs are sketched in, and a note of where research evidence is needed though using the internet to get any basic/background information that he need 2-Finding out as much as possible about the topic to produce a fully elaborated, polished piece of writing. 3- Some of the reading involves more skimming and scanning 4- searching for ideas and evidence to support points 5- Avoid reading through whole books and chapters; Instead, use the rough plan as a guide and search for relevant paragraphs. 6- Highlighting and make notes of things that help to answer the question. 7- copying the notes in the outline page

Reflect, valuate and refine the plan					1-Writing a second plan. This is based on the first plan, but he rethinks the structure he outlined before, in the light of his topic 2-Checking the question and addresses every part of it in the plan 3-Deciding where he uses the points as evidence or examples in his essay and putting notes in his detailed plan. 4-Specifying each point the essay makes by writing the main point of part 5-Checking paragraphs if they are in the most logical order.	
First draft	1- Starting with the introduction. While he writes the introduction: • general point about broad issue or topic Discussed • writing the thesis statement	1- Starting with constructing an introduction. While he writes the introduction: • general point about broad issue or topic discussed • writing the thesis statement	1-using the internet to get the ideas 2- Starting with constructing an introduction. While he writes the introduction: • General point about broad issue or topic discussed • More focus on particular	1- Starting with constructing an introduction. While he writes the introduction: • General point about broad issue or topic discussed • More focus on particular aspect of this topic • Writing the thesis	1-using the structure as a guide - (scan the notes and allocate them to a part of the structure) 2- Starting with constructing an introduction. While he writes the introduction: • General point about broad issue or topic discussed • More focus on particular aspect of	1-using the structure as a guide - (scan the notes and allocate them to a part of the structure) 2- Starting with constructing an introduction. While he writes the introduction: • General point about broad issue or topic discussed • More focus on particular aspect of this topic

2-Structure of the body: • A topic sentence: states the topic and the controlling idea and it is the first sentence in the paragraph	2-Structure of the body: • A topic sentence: states the topic and the controlling idea and it is the first sentence in the paragraph. •Two supporting sentences •evidence: the point is supported by evidence from real examples 3-Following the same strategies in the third paragraph. But he didn't complete it 4-while he writes the conclusion: • Restate the main argument emphasize	aspect of this topic • Writing the thesis statement 3-Structure of the body: • A topic sentence: states the topic and the controlling idea and it is the first sentence in the paragraph. •Two supporting sentences: to develop the point he is making using information, with a smooth flow from one sentence to the next. •Evidence: the point is supported by evidence from real examples 4-Following the same strategies in the third paragraph. 5-while he writes the conclusion:1)Restate the main argument emphasize or reinforce the main points of the argument in a concise	statement 2-Structure of the body: • A topic sentence: states the topic and the controlling idea and it is the first sentence in the paragraph. •Three supporting sentences: to develop the point he is making using information, with a smooth flow from one sentence to the next. 3-Following the same strategies in the third paragraph. 4-while he writes the conclusion: • Restate the main argument emphasize or reinforce the main points of the argument in a concise way	this topic • Writing the thesis statement 3-Structure of the body: • A topic sentence: states the topic and the controlling idea and it is the first sentence in the paragraph. •Two supporting sentences: to develop the point he is making using information, with a smooth flow from one sentence to the next. •Evidence: the point is supported by evidence from real examples 4-Following the same strategies in the third paragraph. 5-while he writes the conclusion: • Restate the main argument emphasize or reinforce the main points of the argument in a concise way • Providing personal opinion 6-refer back to the prewriting to	• Writing the thesis statement 3-Structure of the body: • A topic sentence: states the topic and the controlling idea and it is the first sentence in the paragraph. •Two supporting sentences: to develop the point he is making using information, with a smooth flow from one sentence to the next. •Evidence: the point is supported by evidence from real examples 4-Following the same strategies in the third paragraph. 5-while he writes the conclusion: • Restate the main argument emphasize or reinforce the main points of the argument in a concise way • Providing personal opinion 6-refer back to the prewriting to

		• Providing personal opinion	way, 2)Providing personal opinion	• Providing personal opinion	keep the writing on track and ensure that the piece of writing maintains its focus	keep the writing on track and ensure that the piece of writing maintains its focus
Additional reading			searching for ideas and evidence to support points but in his first language(Arabic)		Need more reading	
Revising	Using cutting, pasting and deleting to revise. Checking if the ideas in the paper make sense.	Using cutting, pasting and deleting to revise. Checking if the ideas in the paper make sense.	1- Tightening and cleaning up the language. 2-Using cutting, pasting and deleting to revise. Checking if the ideas in the paper make sense. 3-Organization (organize the paragraphs)	Using cutting, pasting and deleting to revise. Checking if the ideas in the paper make sense.	1- Tightening and cleaning up the language. 2- Organizing the paragraphs. 3- Checking the amount of words 4-Checking the style of the worlds 5- Using cutting, pasting and deleting to revise. Checking if all of the ideas in the paper make sense. Does the body of your paper support your thesis?	1- Tightening and cleaning up the language. 2- Using cutting, pasting and deleting to revise. Checking if all of the ideas in the paper to make sense. Does the body of your paper support your thesis?

Editing		Capitalization: he changes the letters from capital to small.	1-Capitalization: he changes the letters from small to capital. 2-Punctuation (full stop) 3- Using the computer spell checker which underlines any word that needs to be checked. He click write and choose the appropriate choice. 4- Eliminating grammatical which are known through the electronic computer checker. He click write and choose the appropriate choice. 5- Translation (using Google translation from Arabic to English)	1-Capitalization: he changes the letters from small to capital. 2- Attempting to check the spelling through changing letters but he does not do it correctly.	1-Eliminating grammatical which are known through the electronic computer checker. He clicks right and chooses the appropriate choice. 2- Attempting to correct the spelling without using computer spell checker by delete and add letters. 3-Using the computer spell checker which underlines any word that needs to be checked. He click write and choose the appropriate choice. 4-Using Word Choice techniques by click write and choose another word. 5-Using (synonym) is word that sound alike or nearly alike but has different spellings editing 6- Capitalization: he changes the letters from small to capital.	1-Eliminating grammatical which are known through the electronic computer checker. He click write and choose the appropriate choice. 2-Using the computer spell checker which underlines any word that needs to be checked. He click write and choose the appropriate choice. 3-Using Word Choice techniques by click write and choose another word. 4-Using (synonym) is word that sound alike or nearly alike but has different spellings

Table 3 Strategies weak, medium and strong students used

Table 3 illustrates the strategies used by all participants. To start with, since weak students did not use many strategies, there was a little attempt to complete the task. Furthermore, based on the result, although weak students used some strategies, they did not apply them in proper ways. Student A analyzed the topic by working on the question and highlighting the key words.
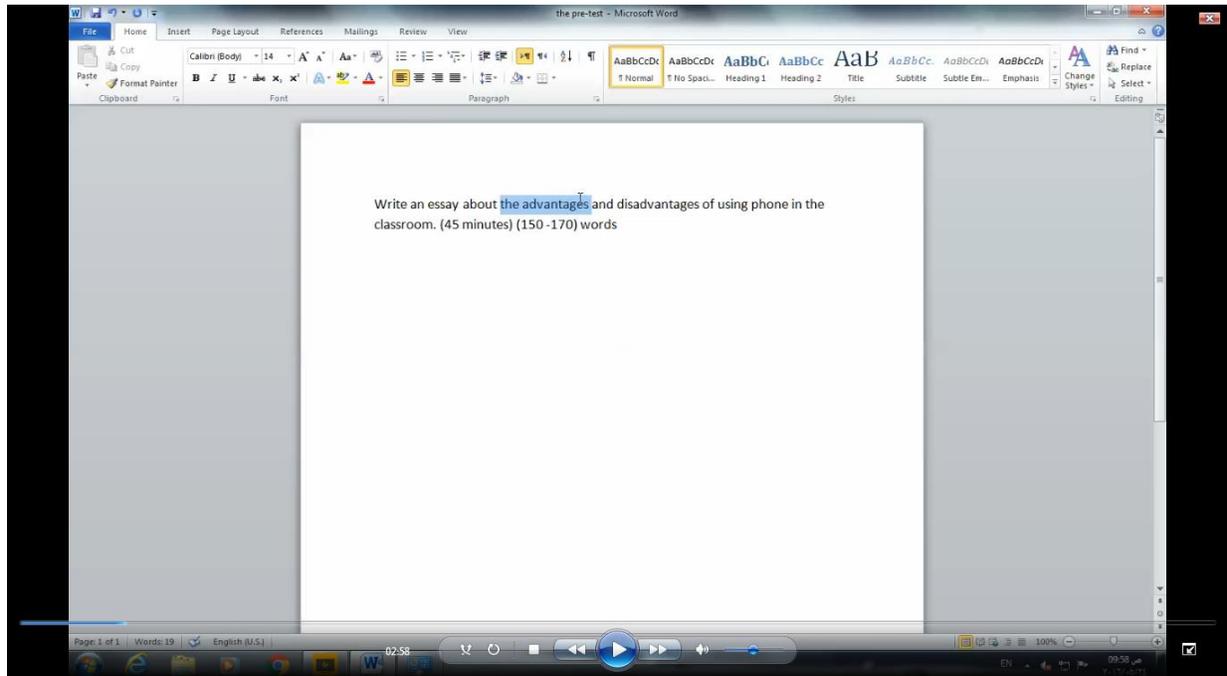
Figure 13: Highlighting the Key Words

Since then, he read about the topic using the internet to obtain basic background information that he needed. He attempts to search in English but he could not, so he searched for ideas and evidence to support his pints in his first language (Arabic).
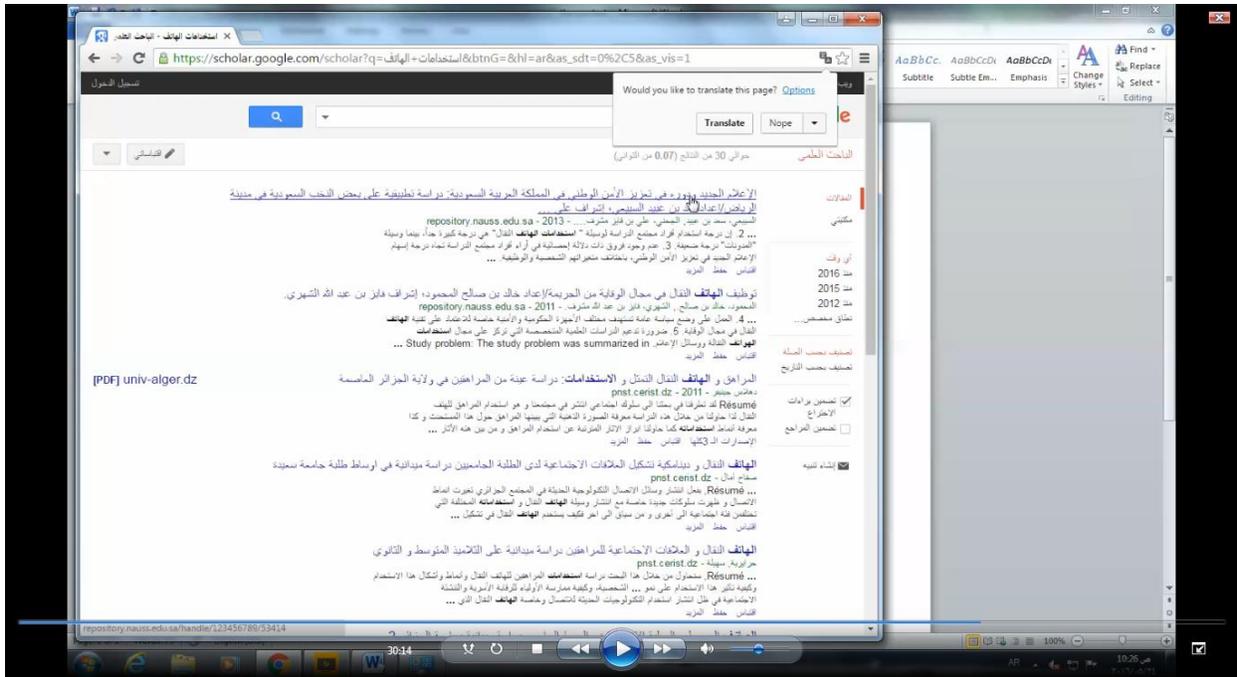
Figure 14: Searching in the Internet

This was followed by writing the introduction in which he wrote the general sentence about broad issue with the thesis statement.
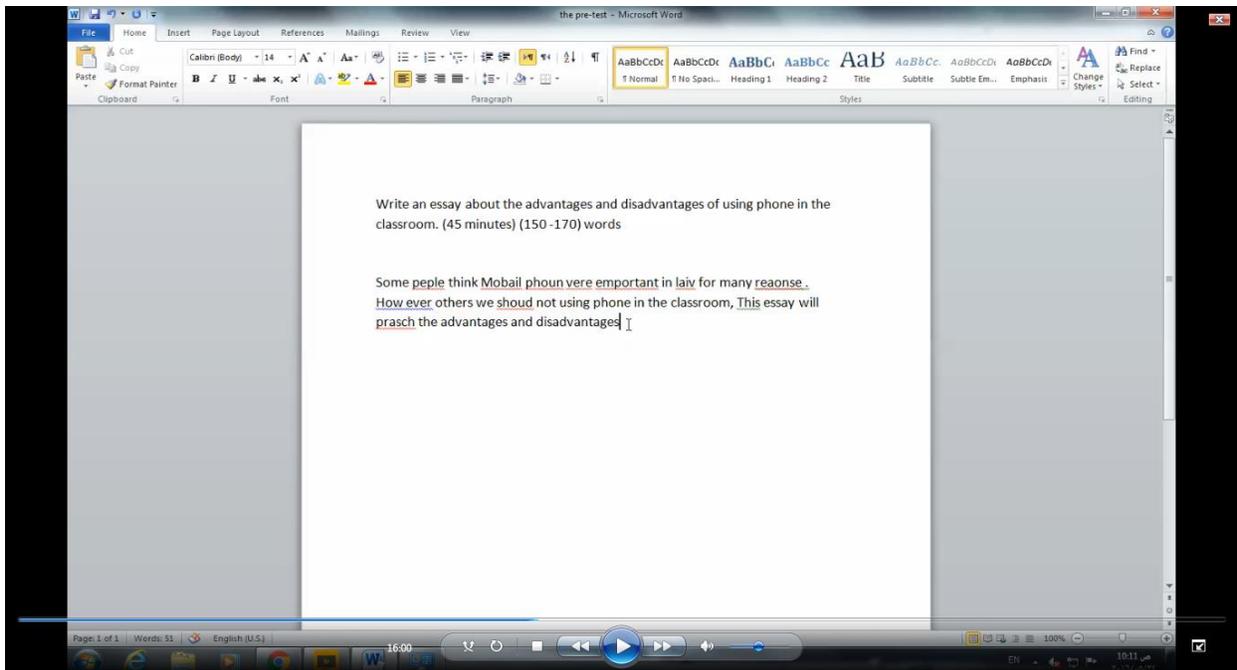
Figure 15: Writing the Thesis Statement

In the next paragraph, he began with a topic sentence and the controlling idea.
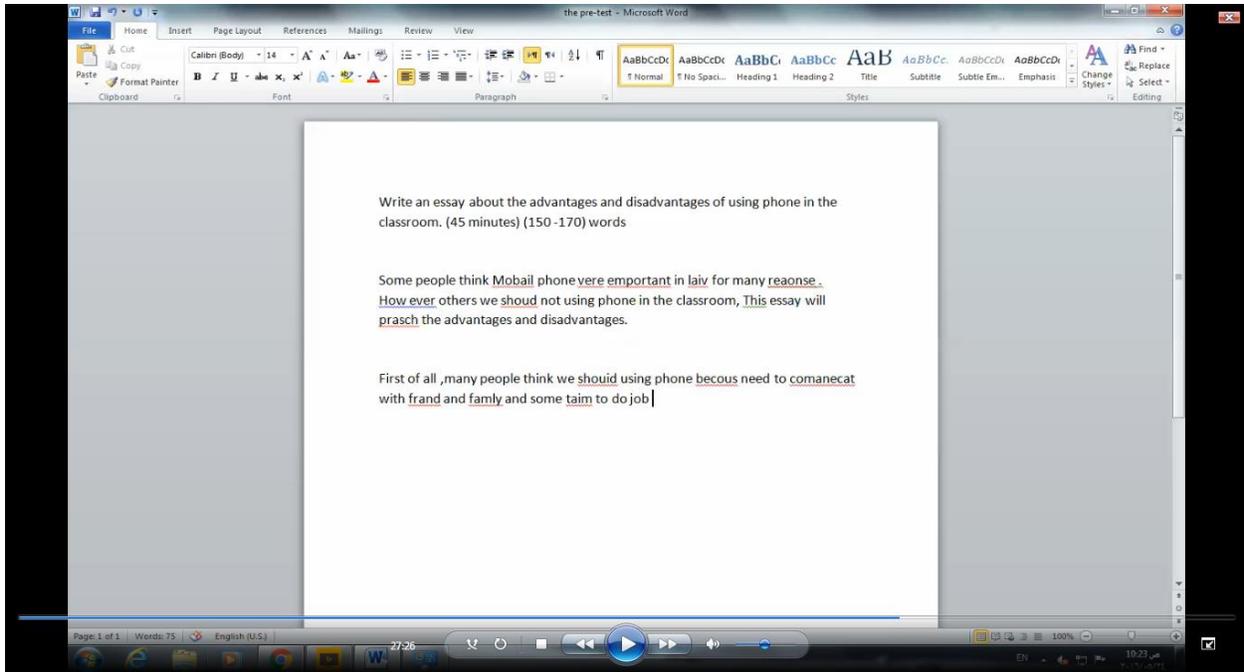
Figure 16: Topic sentence with Controlling Idea

He revised his work by using cutting, pasting and deleting some phrases in order to check if the ideas make sense.
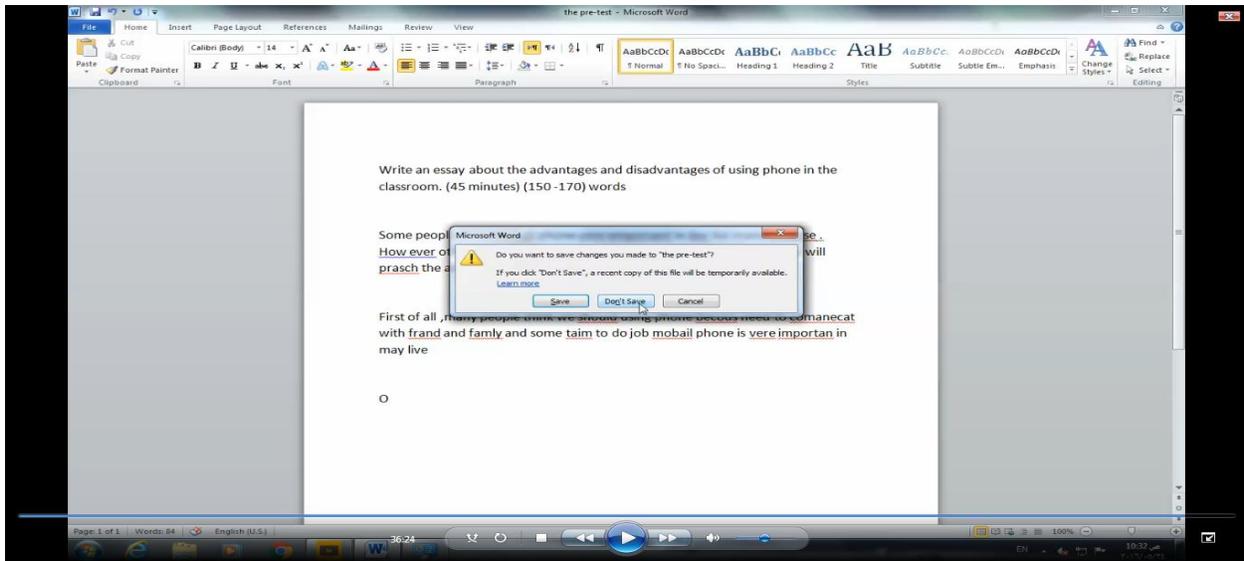
Figure 17: Cutting, Pasting and Deleting

On the other hand, student B immediately started with constructing the introduction. While he wrote the introduction, he provided two general points about the topic before introducing the thesis statement.
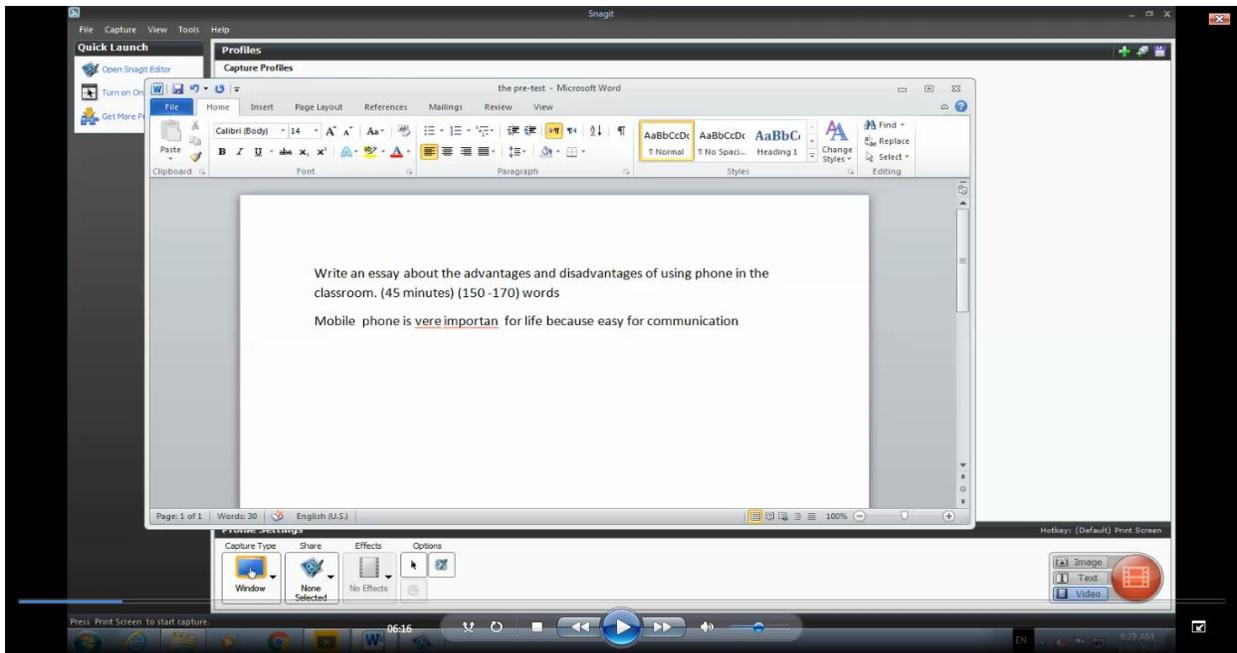
Figure 18: Constructing the Introduction
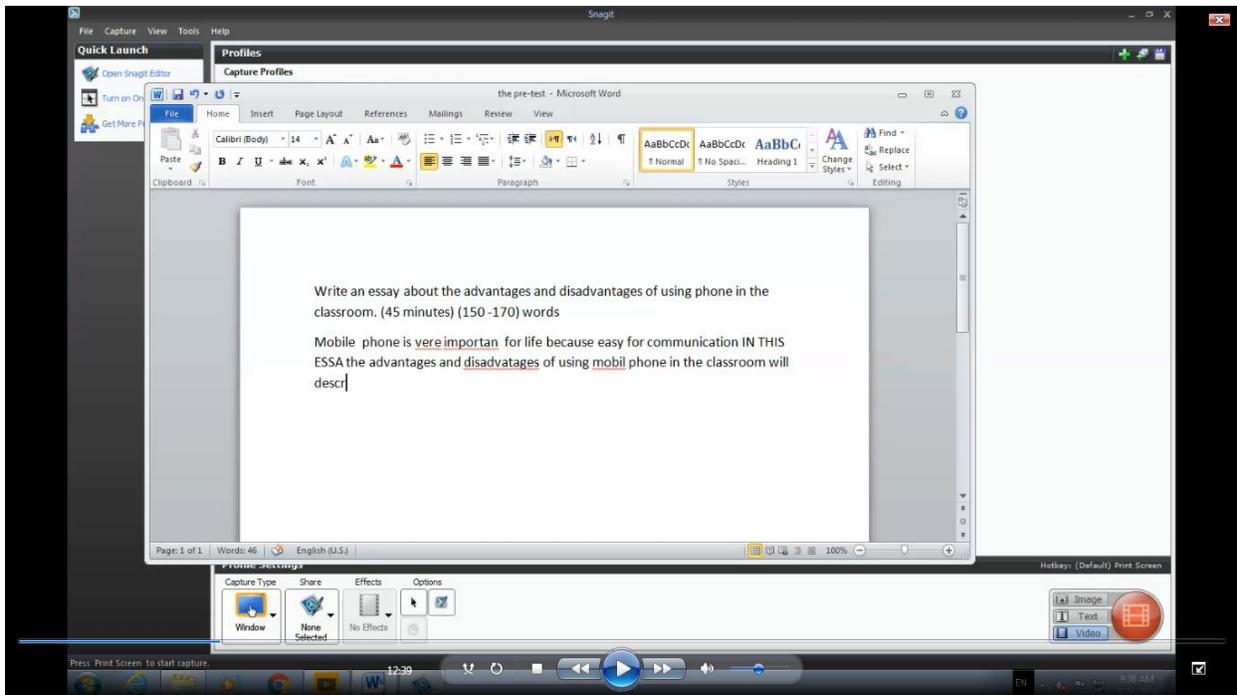
Figure 19: Writing the Thesis Statement

Then, he moved to the structure of the body by stating the topic sentences and controlling ideas. He supported his idea by providing real examples.
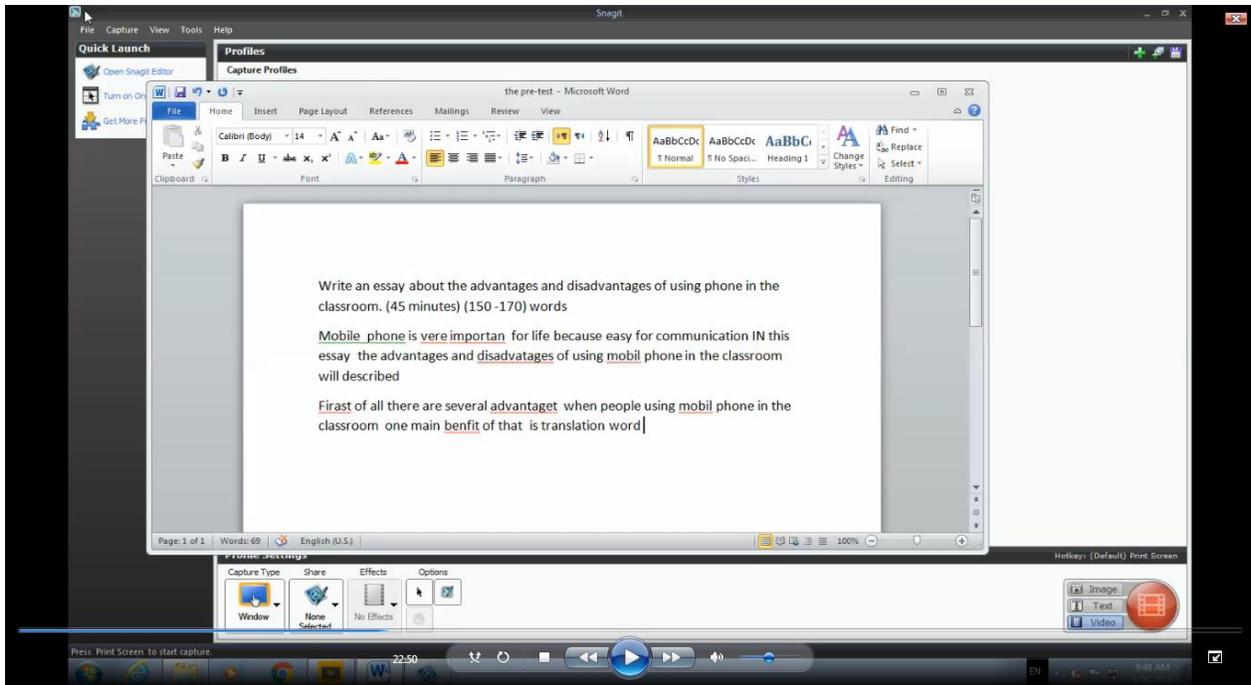
Figure 20: Stating the Topic Sentences
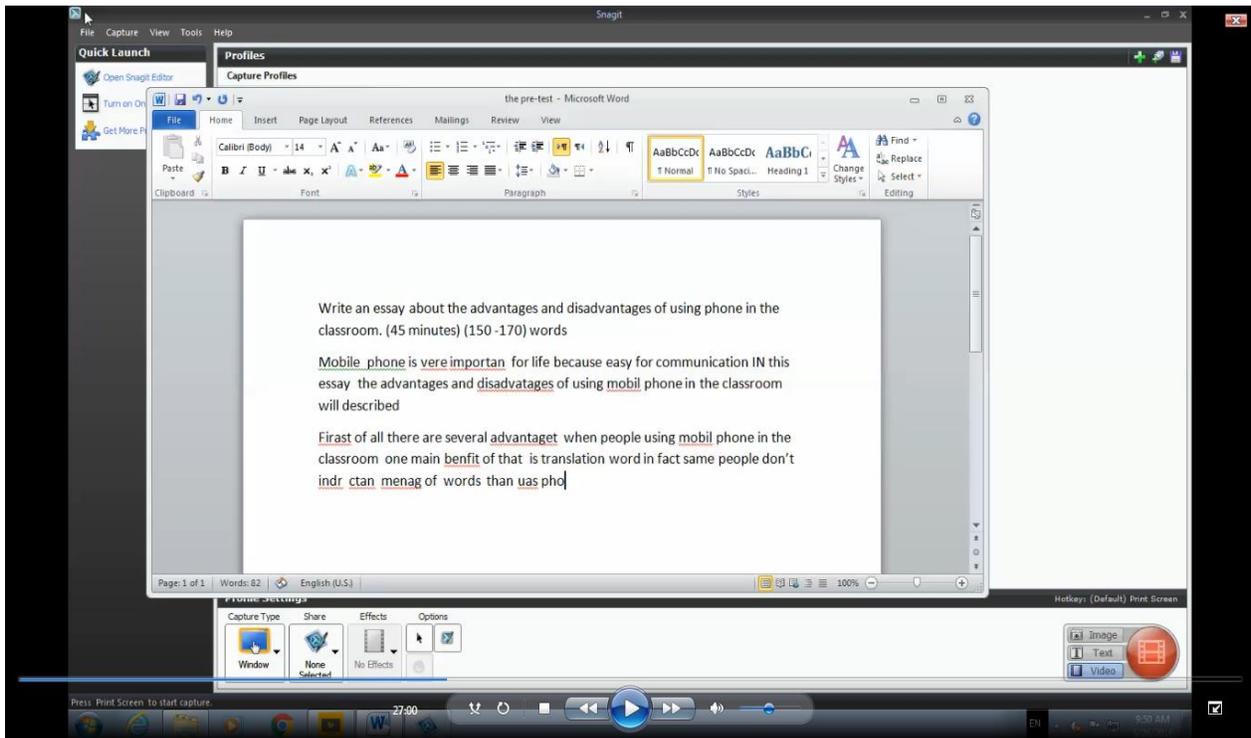
Figure 21: Providing some Examples

He followed the same strategies in the third paragraph but he did not complete it because of time consuming.
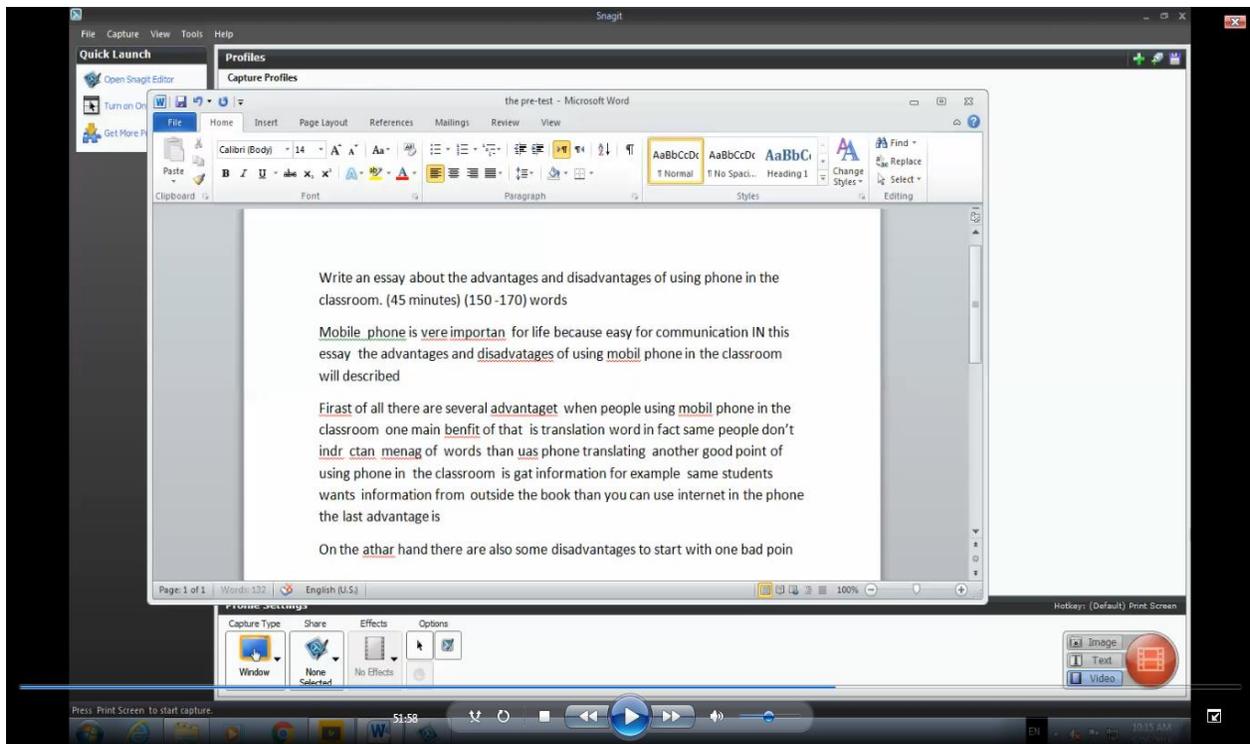
Figure 22: Uncompleted

In conclusion, he restated the main argument emphasis and provided his personal opinion.
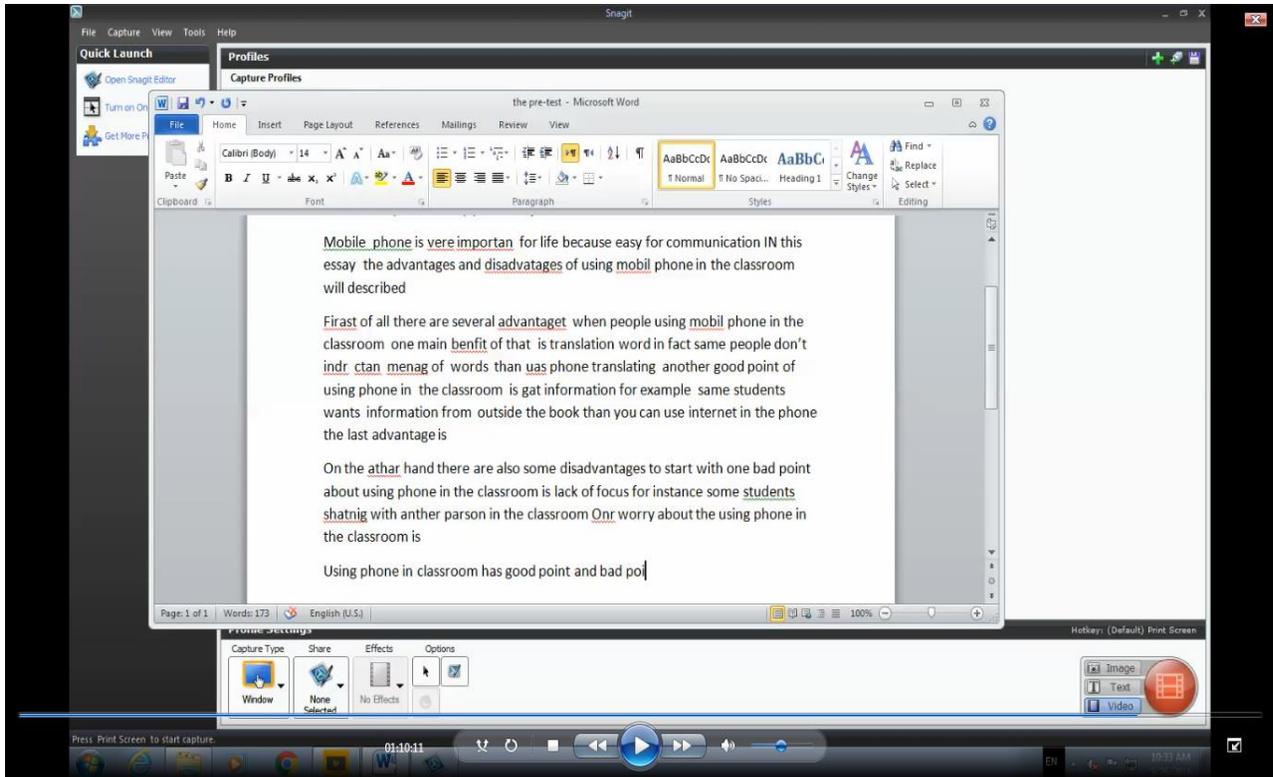
Figure 23: Restating the Main Argument Emphasis
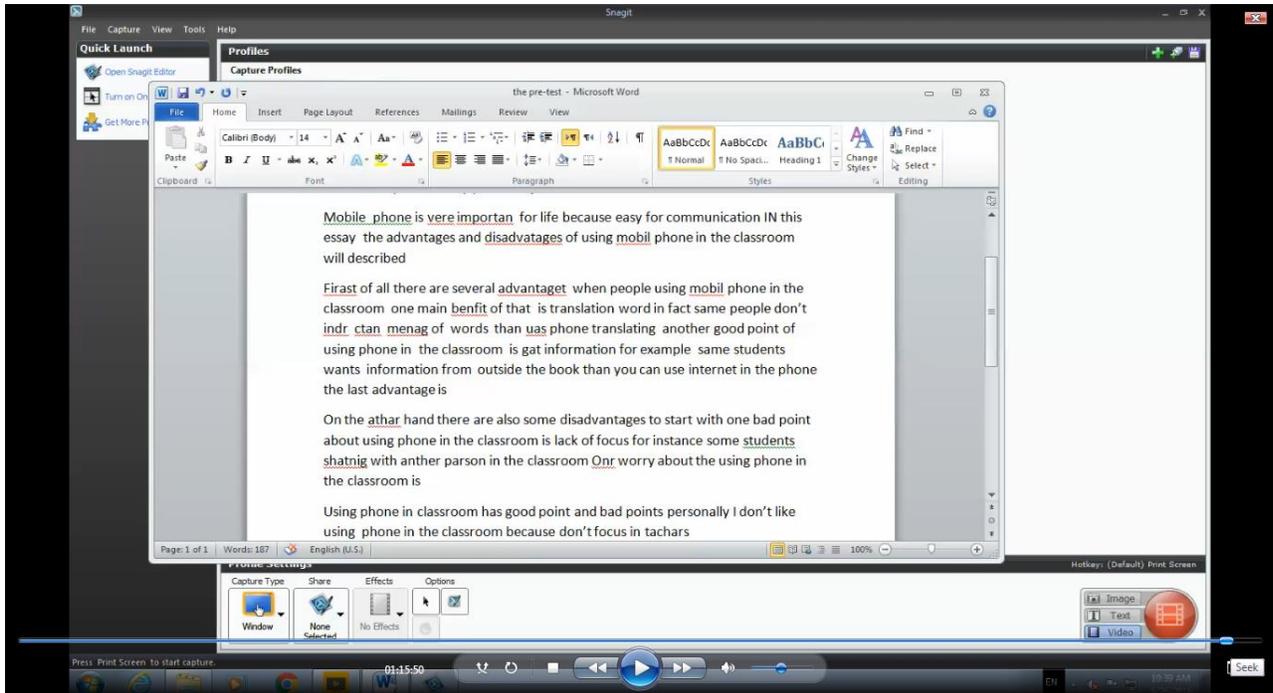
Figure 24: Providing the Personal Opinion

In the revising step he cut, pasted and deleted some phrases to check the coherence of his work.
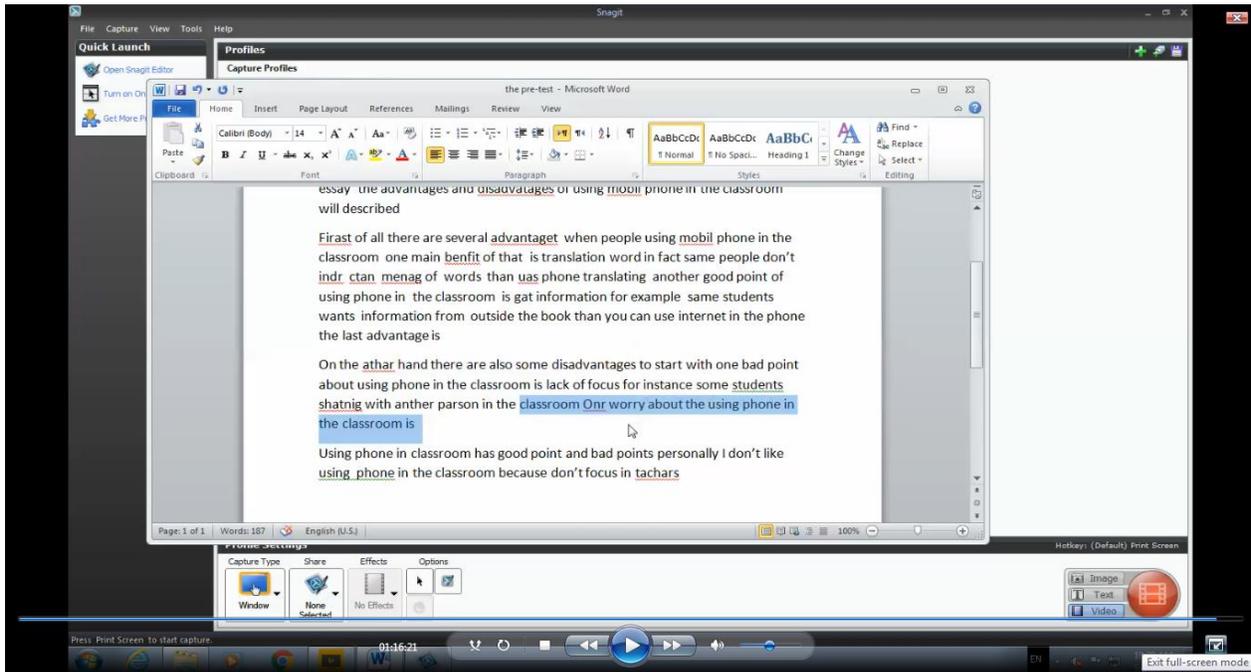
Figure 25: Cutting, Pasting and Deleting

He used only capitalization to edit his writing when he changed the some letters from capital to small letters to make it appropriate.
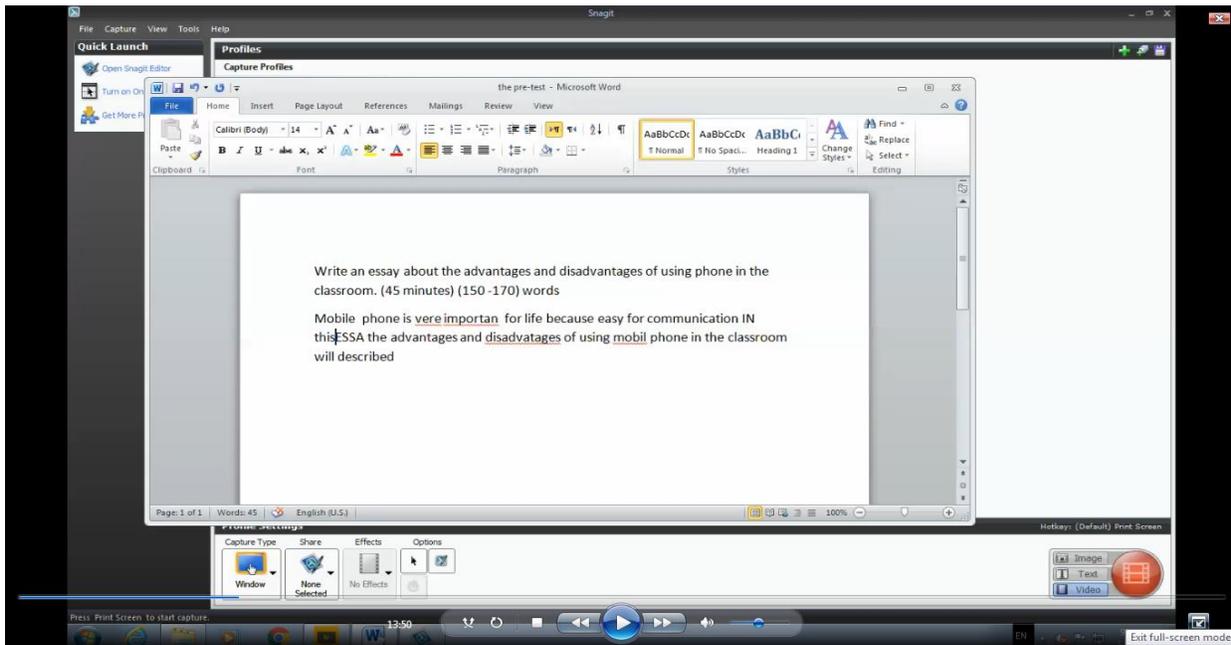
Figure 26: Using Capitalization

Turning to the medium students, with exception of the writing first draft, they varied in their steps and used different strategies. Looking more closely at the student C, he started his writing with working on the question and identifying key words.
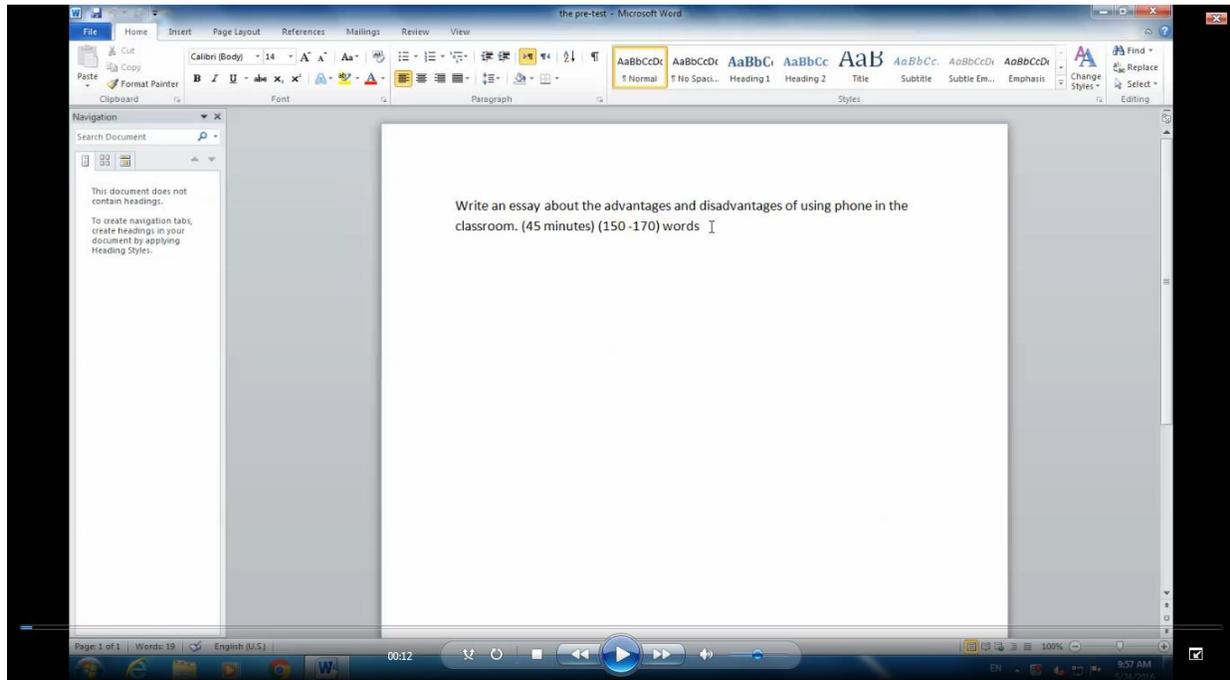

Figure 27: Identifying Key Words

In order to get a general background about the topic, he searched in the internet in his first language (Arabic).
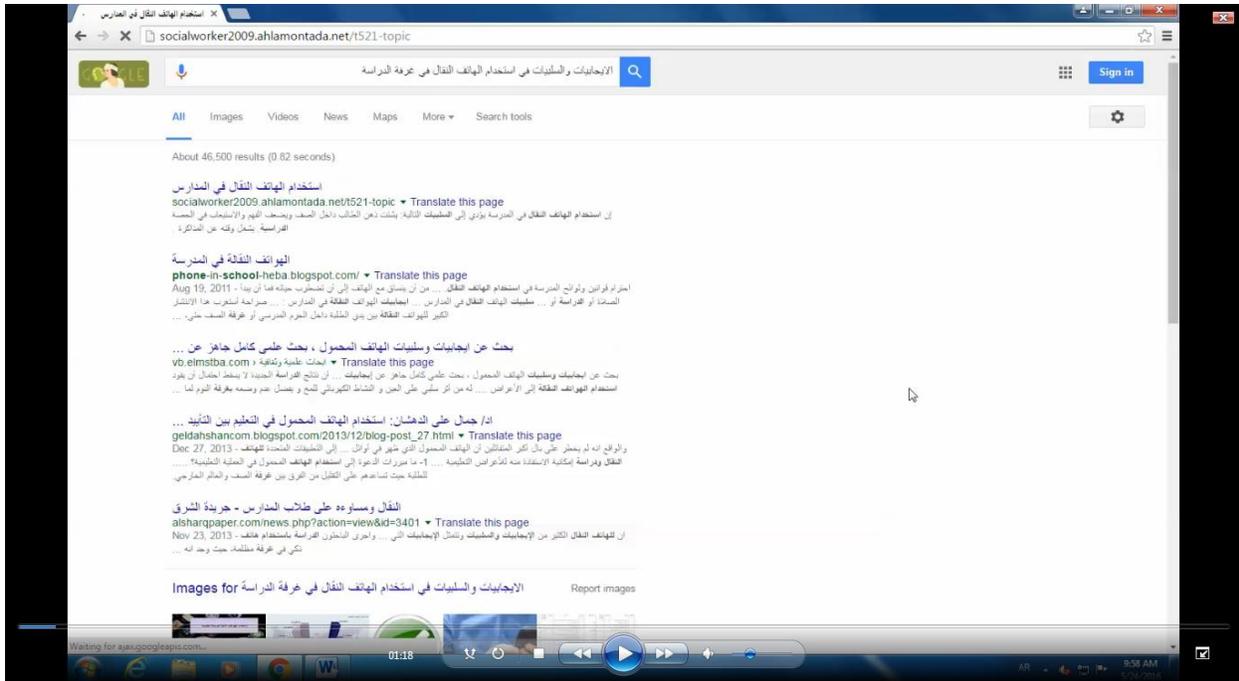
Figure 28: Searching in the Internet
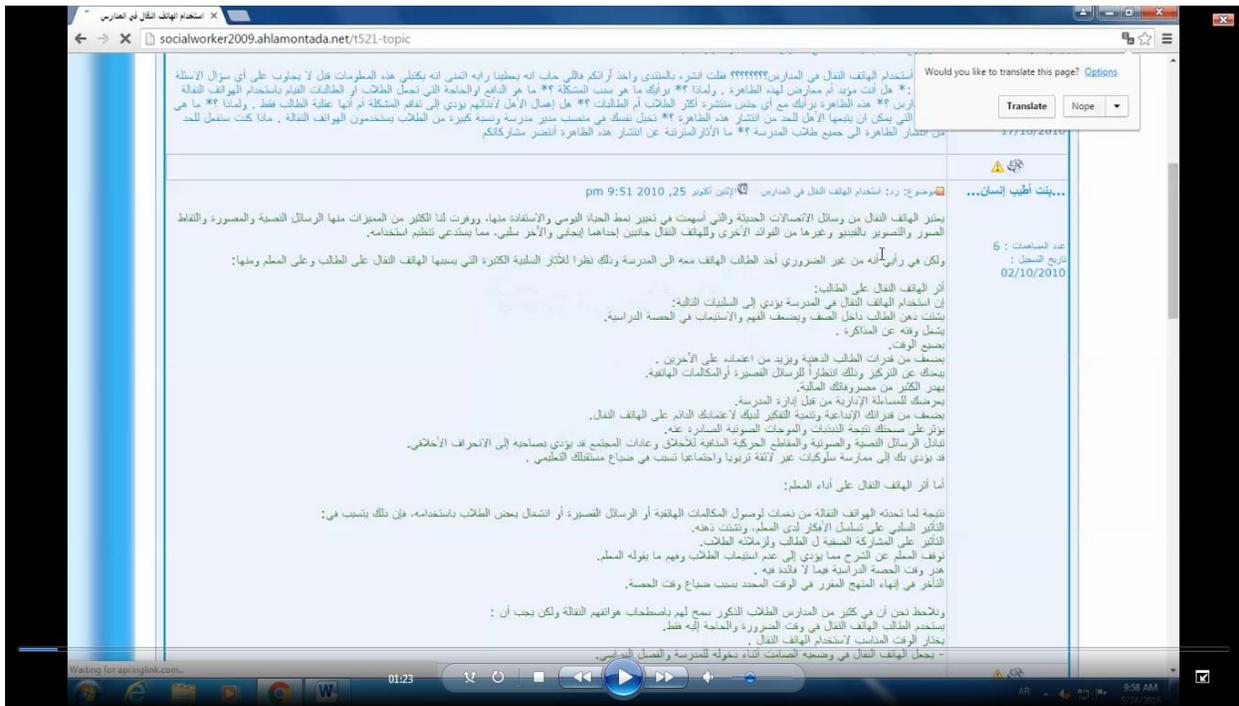
Figure 29: Skimming and Scanning

Since then, he moved to construction the introduction starting with general point about the topic discussed, more focus on particular aspect of this topic and writing the thesis statement.
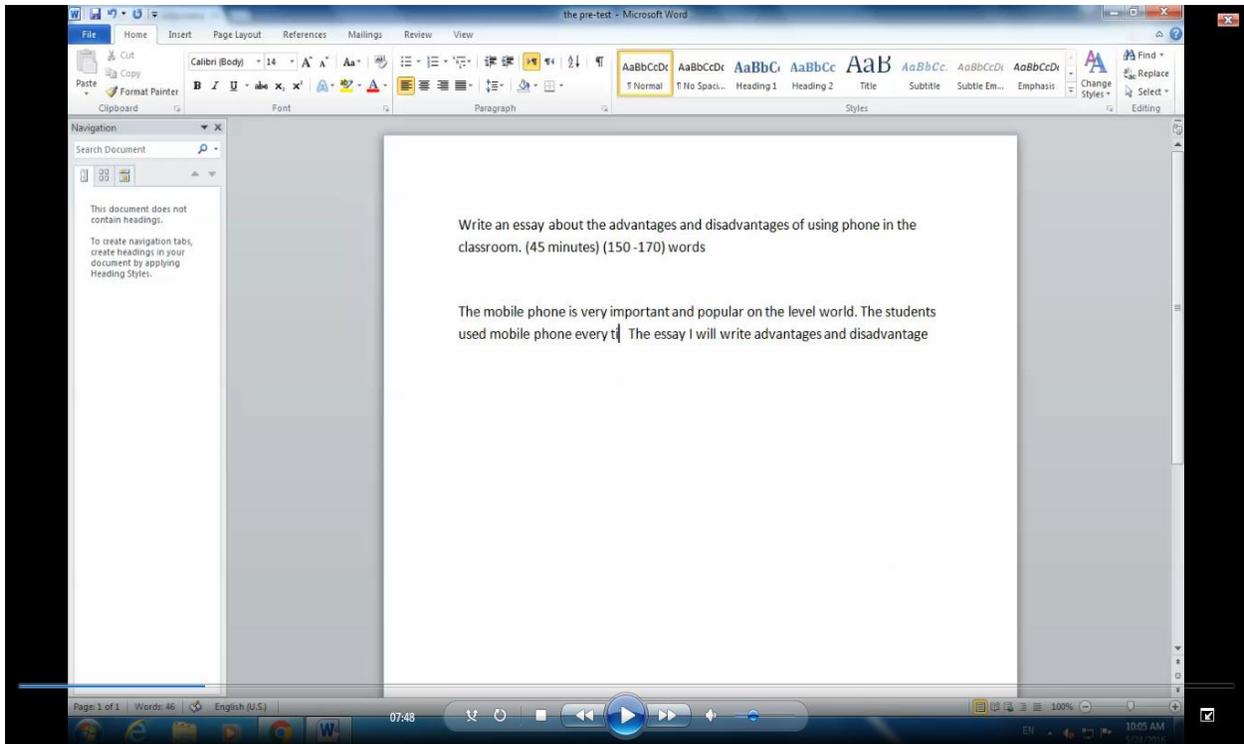
Figure 30: Construction the Introduction
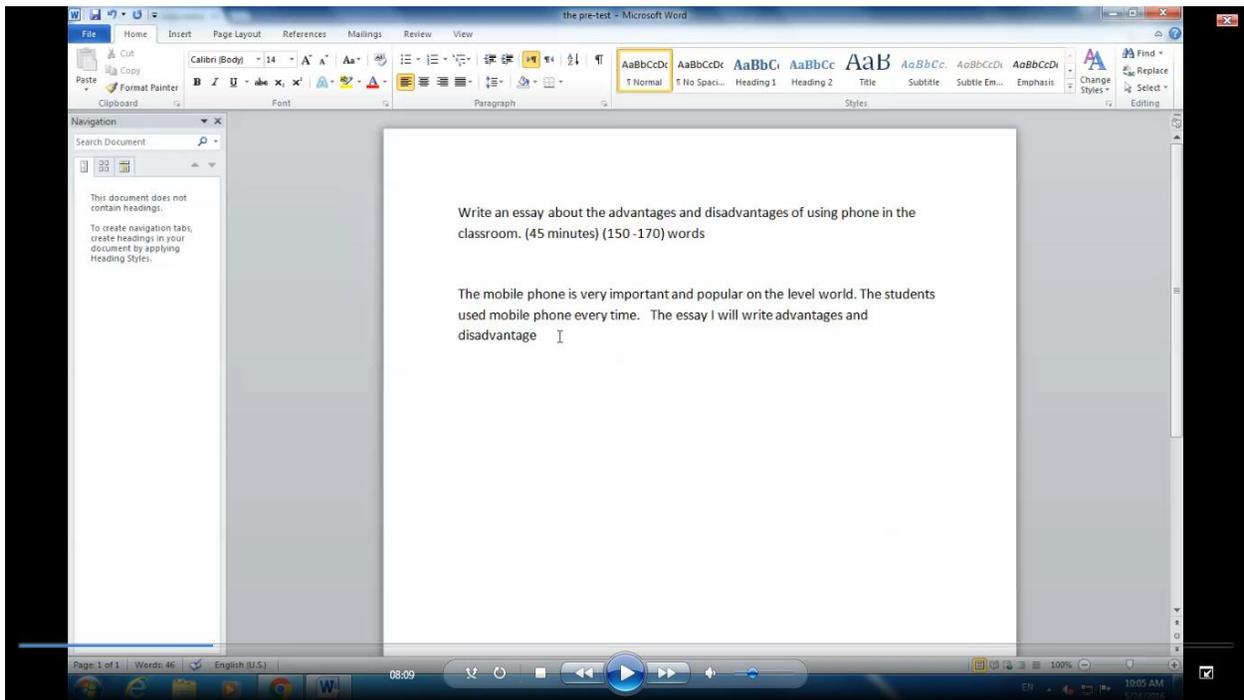
Figure 31: Writing the Thesis Statement

He structured the body by following three steps namely, 1) a topic sentence: states the topic and the controlling idea; 2) two supporting sentences: to develop the point he is making using

information, with a smooth flow from one sentence to the next; 3) Example: the point is supported by providing some real examples.
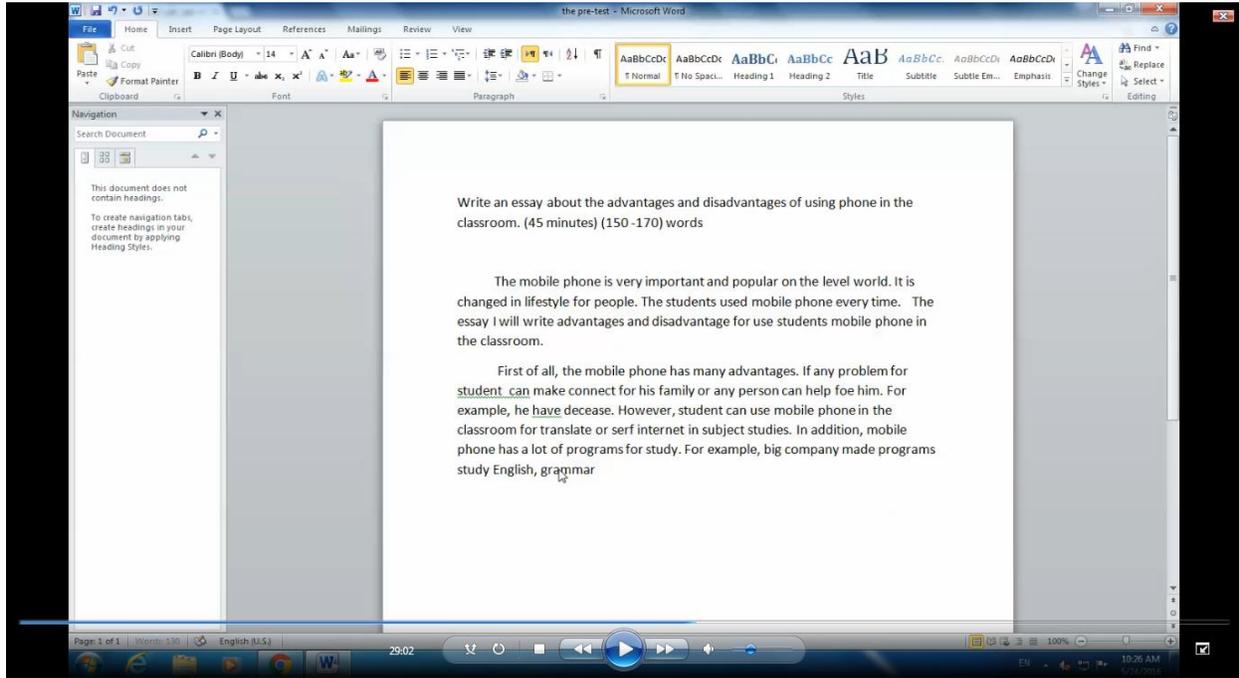

Figure 32: Structuring the Body

This was followed by the third paragraph and he followed the same steps and strategies.
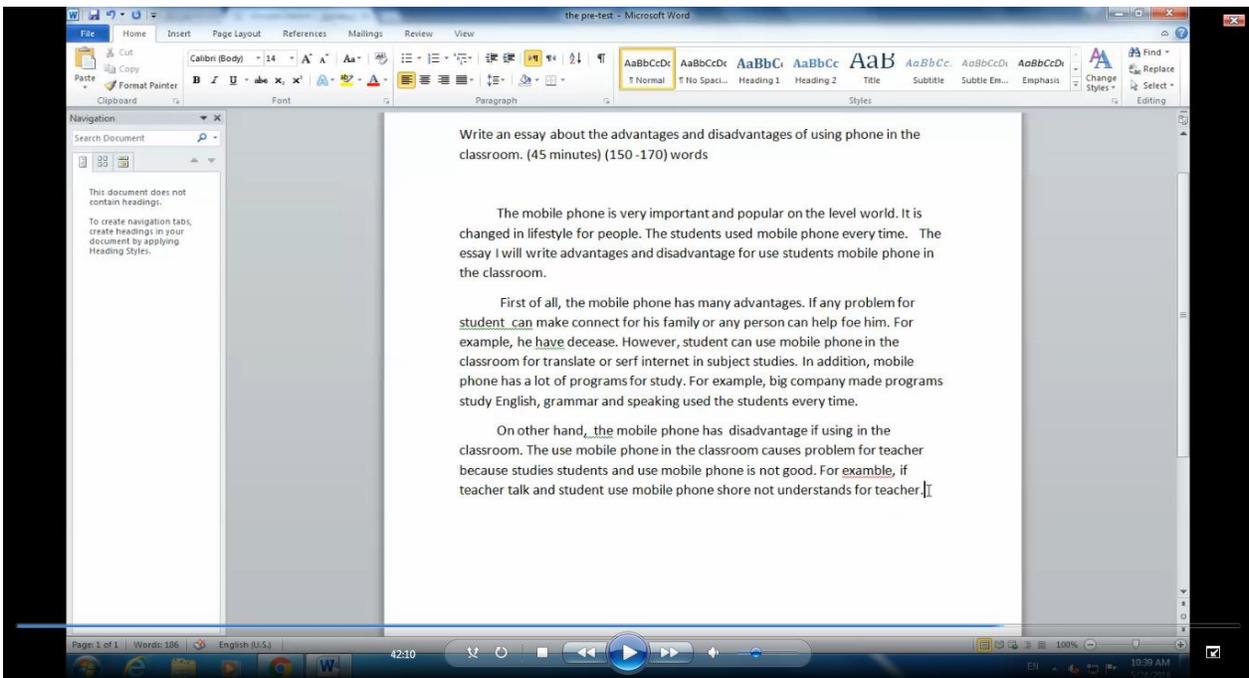
Figure 33: Writing the Third Paragraph

While he wrote the conclusion, he restated the main argument and reinforced the main points of the argument in a concise way. He provided his personal opinion to conclude the essay.
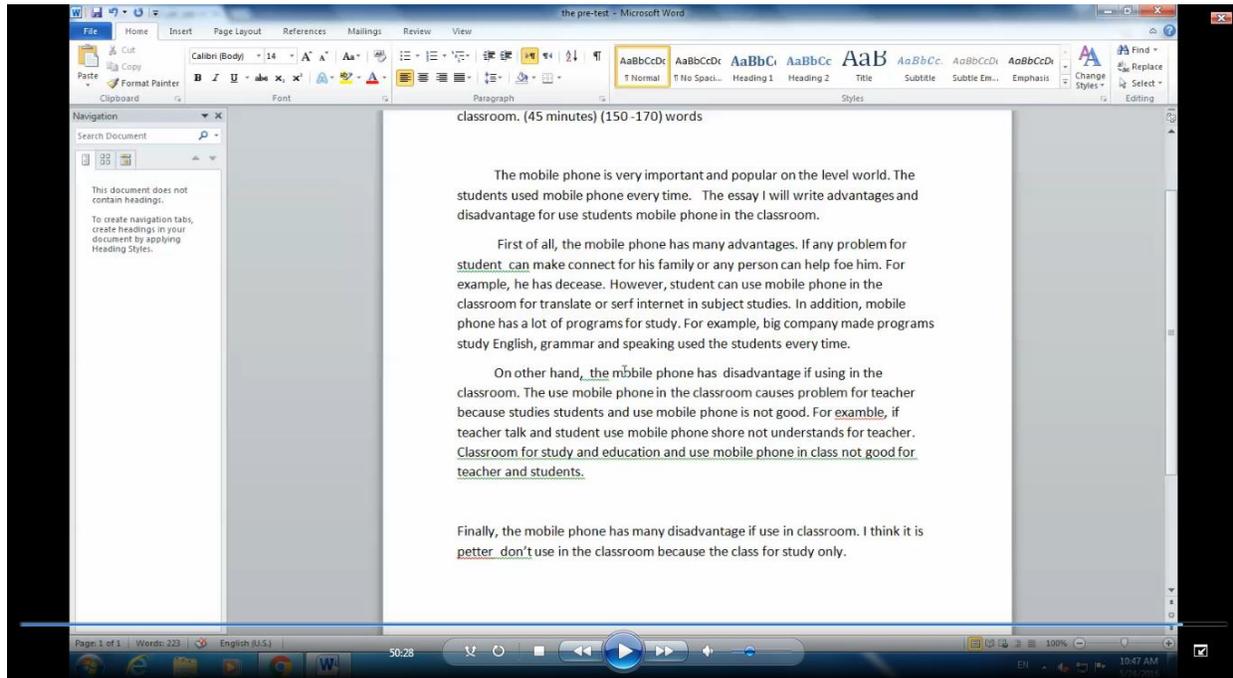

Figure 34: Providing Personal Opinion

In the revision step, he checked the coherence of his work by cutting, pasting and deleting some phrases. In addition, he organized the size and the page layout of the paragraphs. Before he published his work, he used some strategies to edit and lean up his language such as:

1.   Capitalization: he changes the letters from small to capital
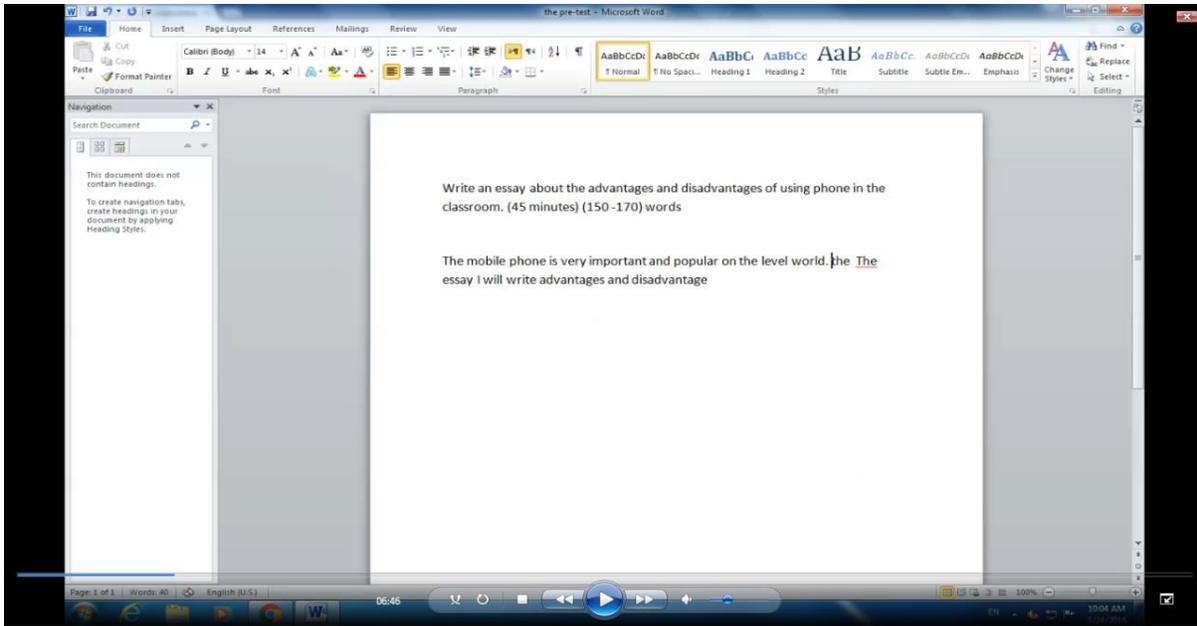
Figure 35: Using Capitalization
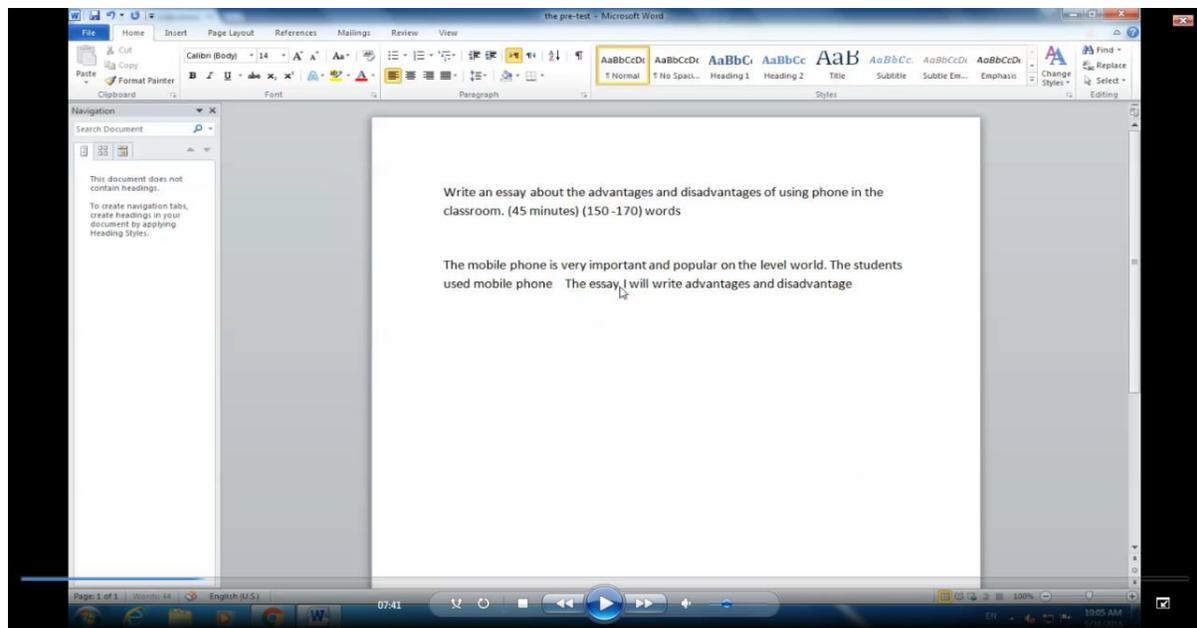
Figure 36: Punctuation (Full Stop)

2. Using the computer spell checker which underlines any word that needs to be checked, he clicked write and chose the appropriate choice
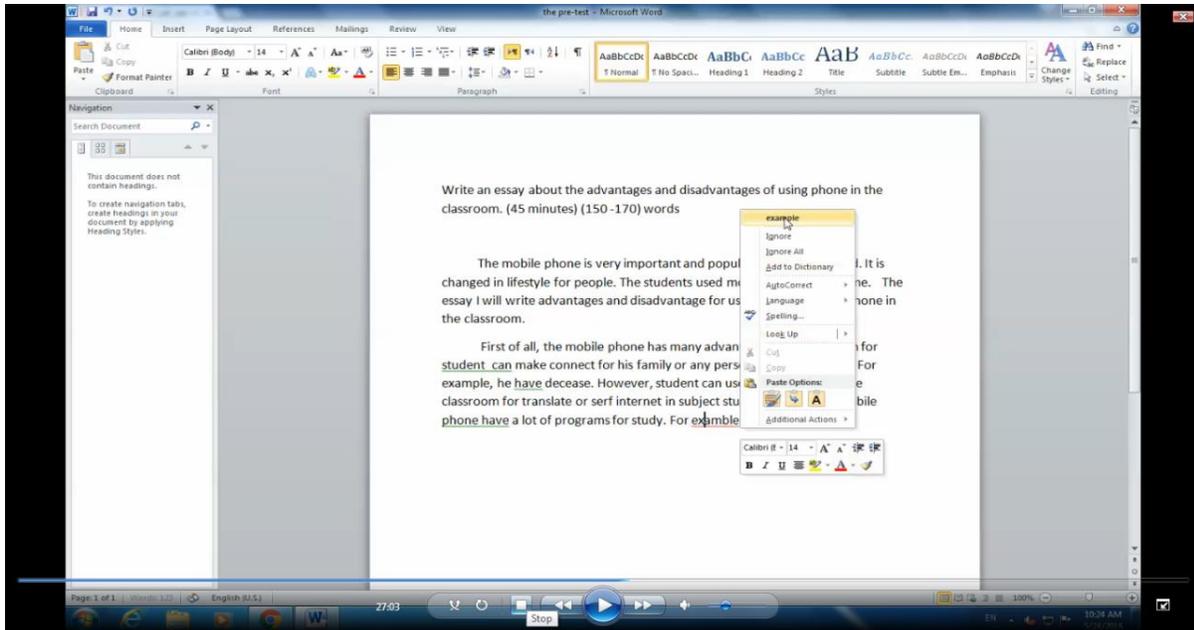
Figure 37: Using the Computer Spell Checker

3.   Eliminating grammatical errors which are known through the electronic computer checker, he clicked write and chose the appropriate choice
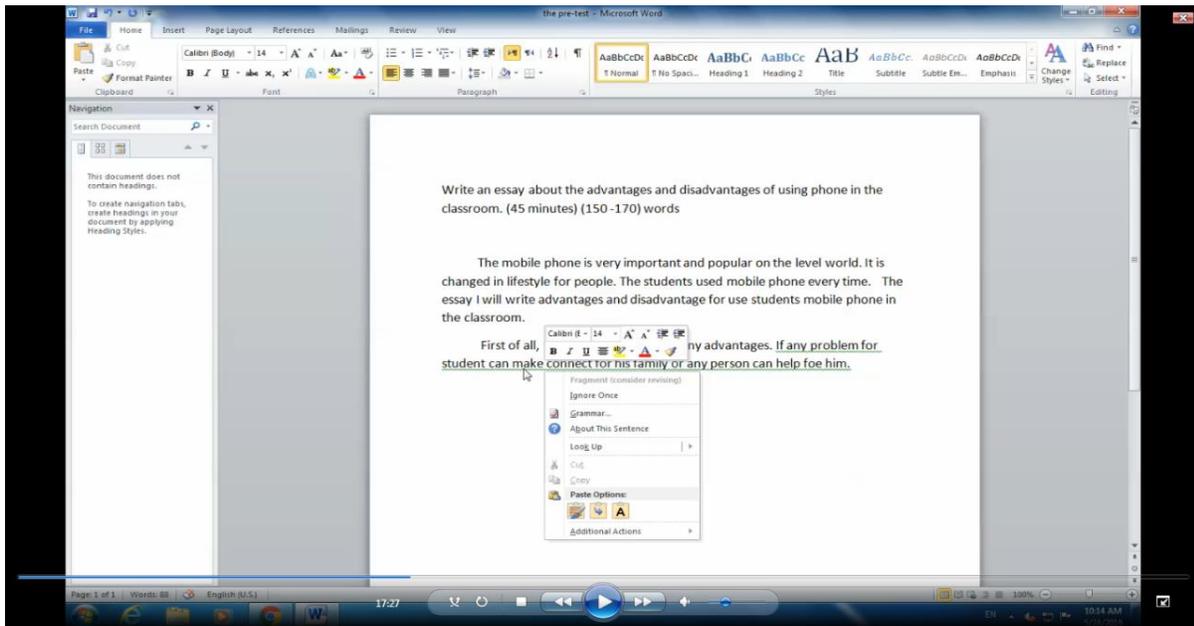
Figure 38: Eliminating Grammatical Errors

4.   Translation (using Google translation from Arabic to English).
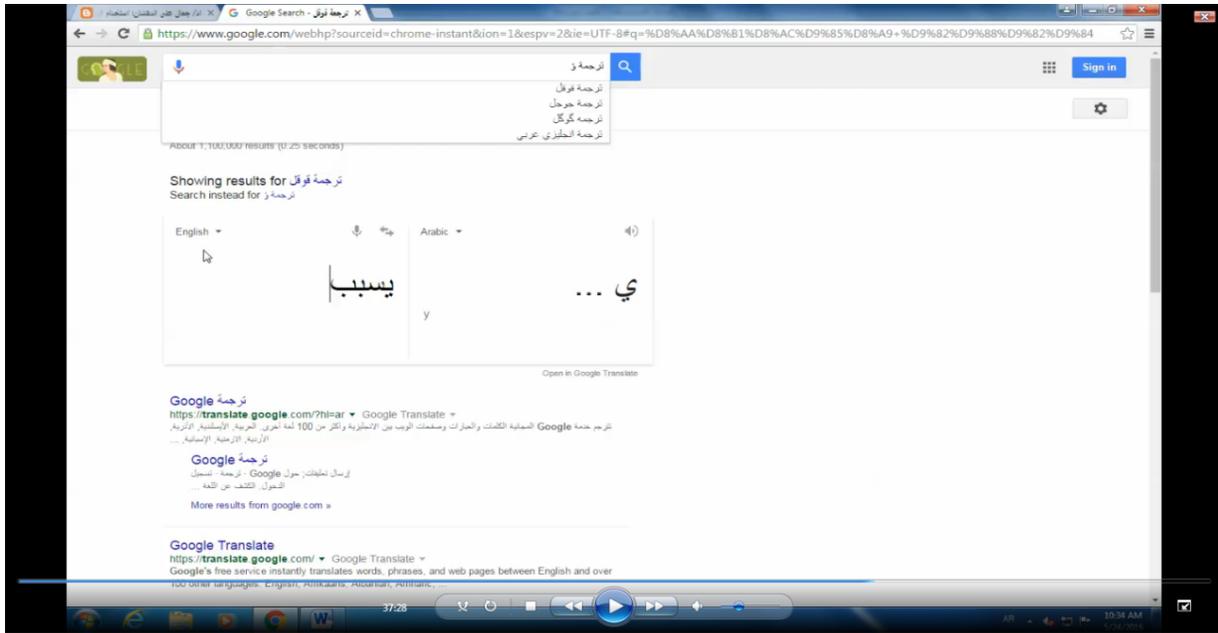
Figure 39: Using Google Translation

On the other hand, the student D focused only on the first draft. While he was doing the first draft, he utilized the formal strategies of writing essay, just like student C. Admittedly, he used some strategies in version and editing steps, however, he did not apply the majority of the strategies and steps.
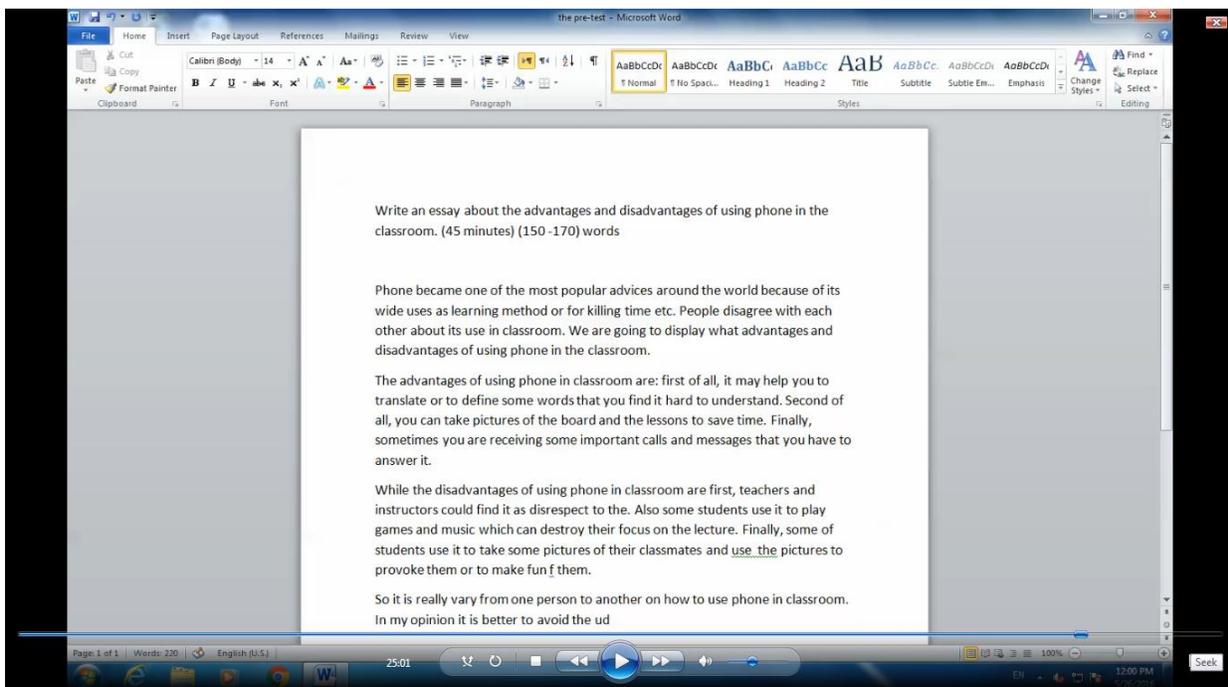
Figure 40: First Draft

The strong students have applied the majority of steps with variety of strategies. Taking student E as the first strong students, after he highlighted the main points in the question, he created an outline that a visual aid for organization and he identified the pros and cons.
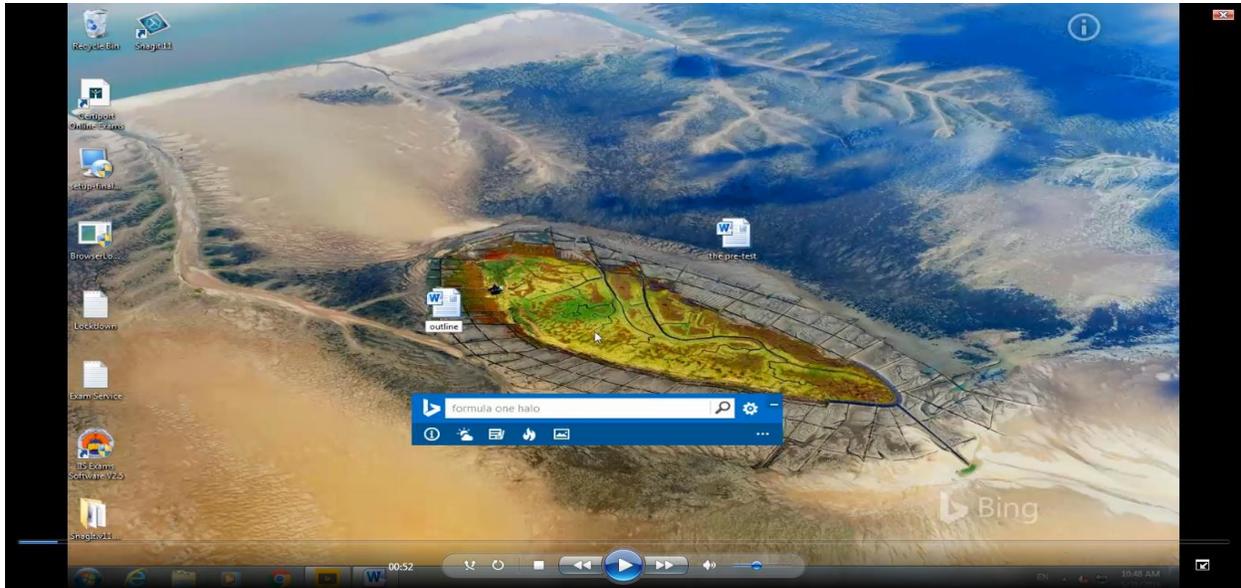
Figure 41: Creating New Microsoft Word Document
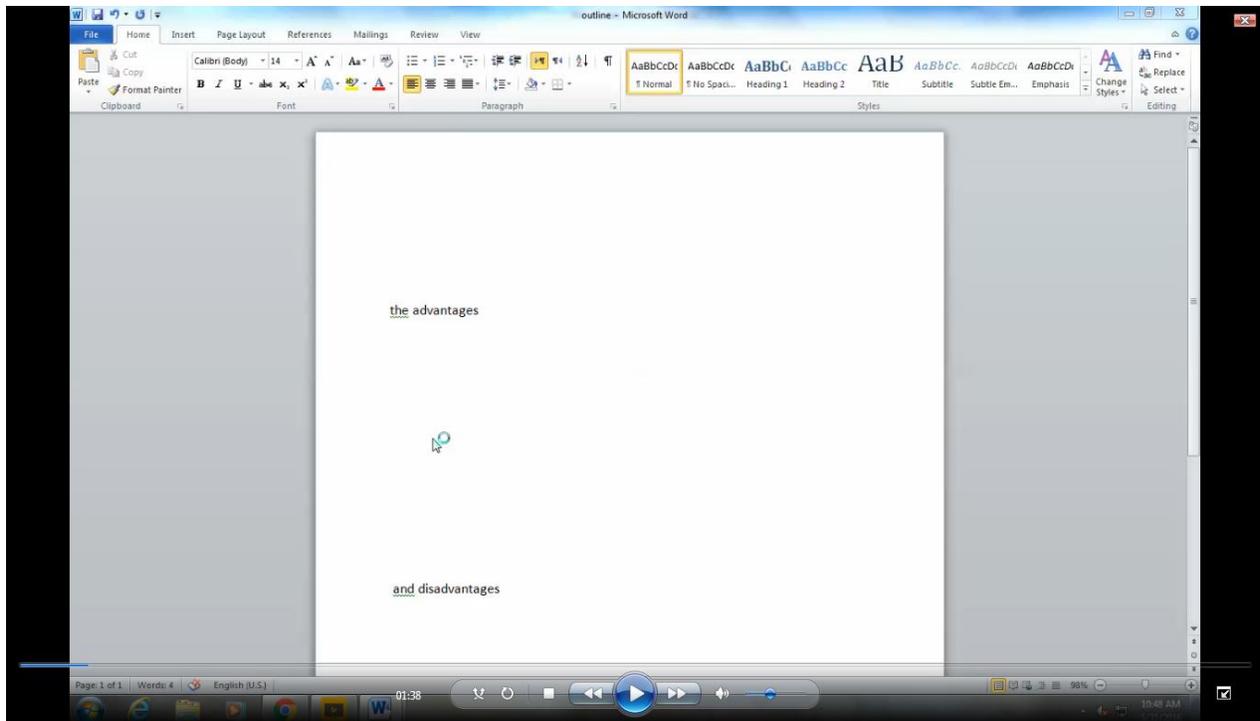
Figure 42: Creating Outline

He used many strategies in the pre-reading step namely:

1.   Possible topics for paragraphs are sketched in and a note of where research evidence is needed though using the internet to get any basic/background information that he needed
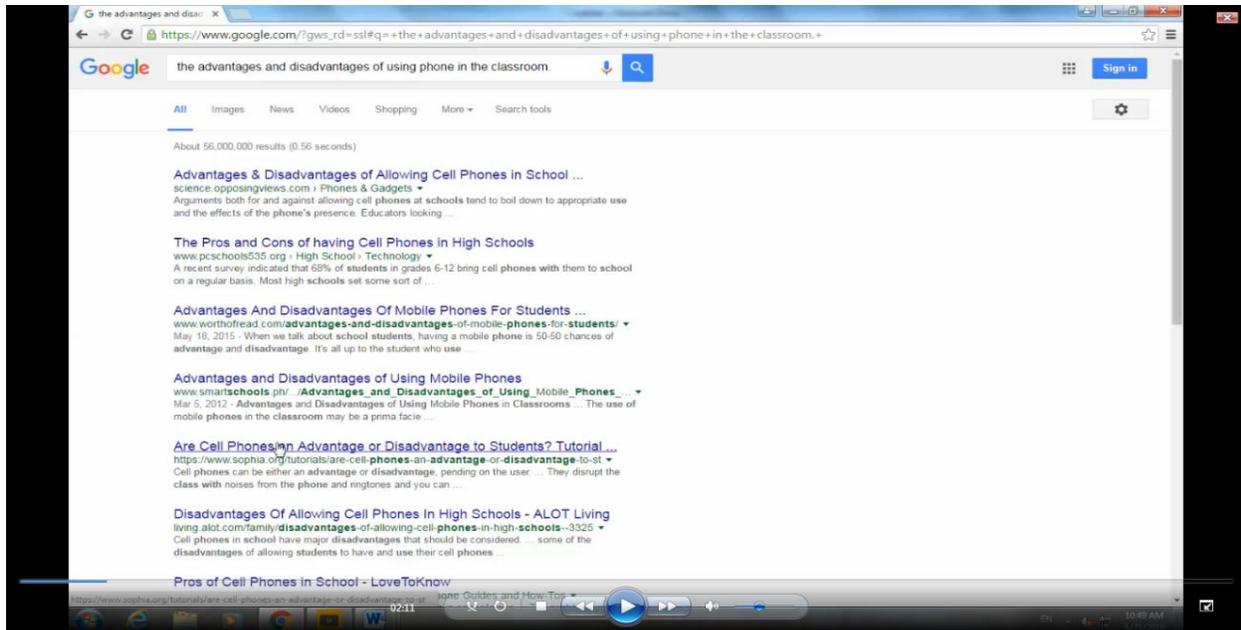
Figure 43: Searching in the Internet

2.   Finding out as much as possible about the topic to produce a fully elaborated, polished piece of writing

3.   Some of the reading involves more skimming and scanning
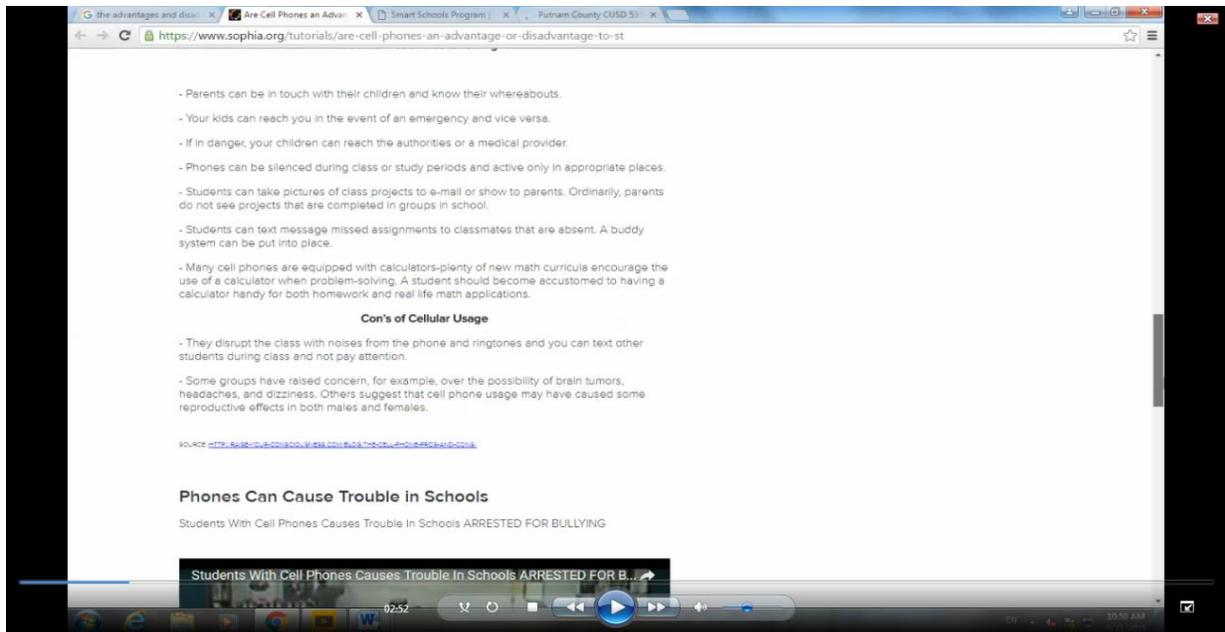
Figure 44: Skimming and Scanning

4. Searching for ideas and evidence to support points; Avoiding read through whole books and chapters; instead of using the rough plan as a guide and search for relevant paragraphs; highlighting and make notes of things that help to answer the question
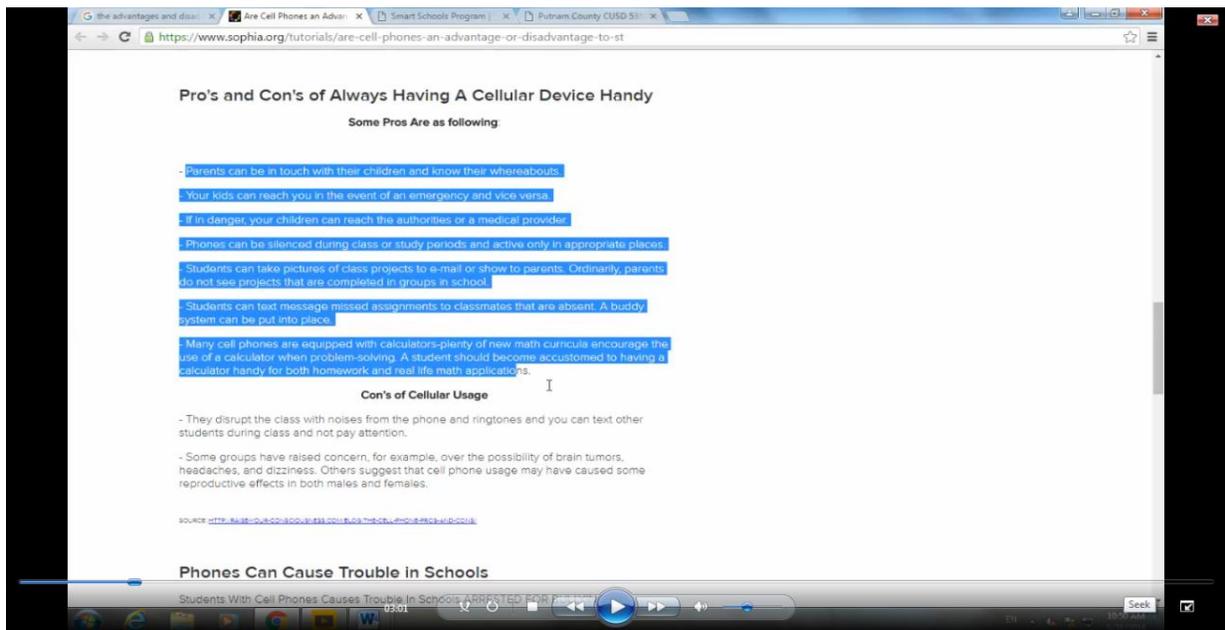
Figure 45: Searching for Ideas

After that, he reflected and evaluated the pan by using several strategies such as:

1.   Rethinking the structure, checking the question and addressed every part of the topic in
      the plan
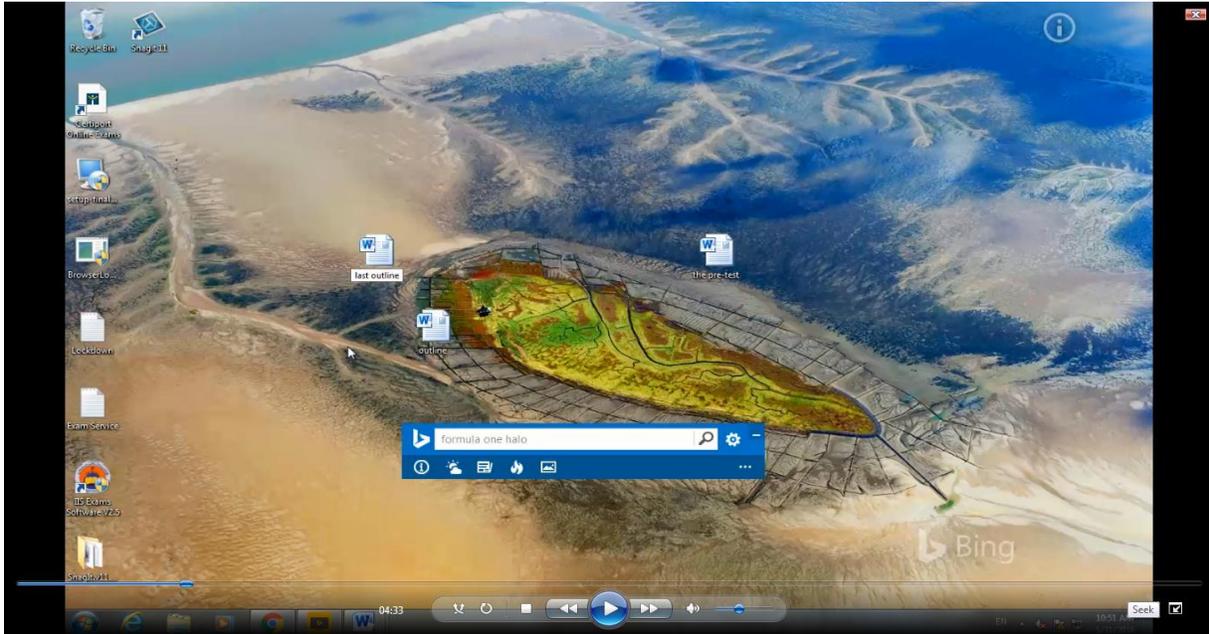
Figure 46: Rethinking the Structure
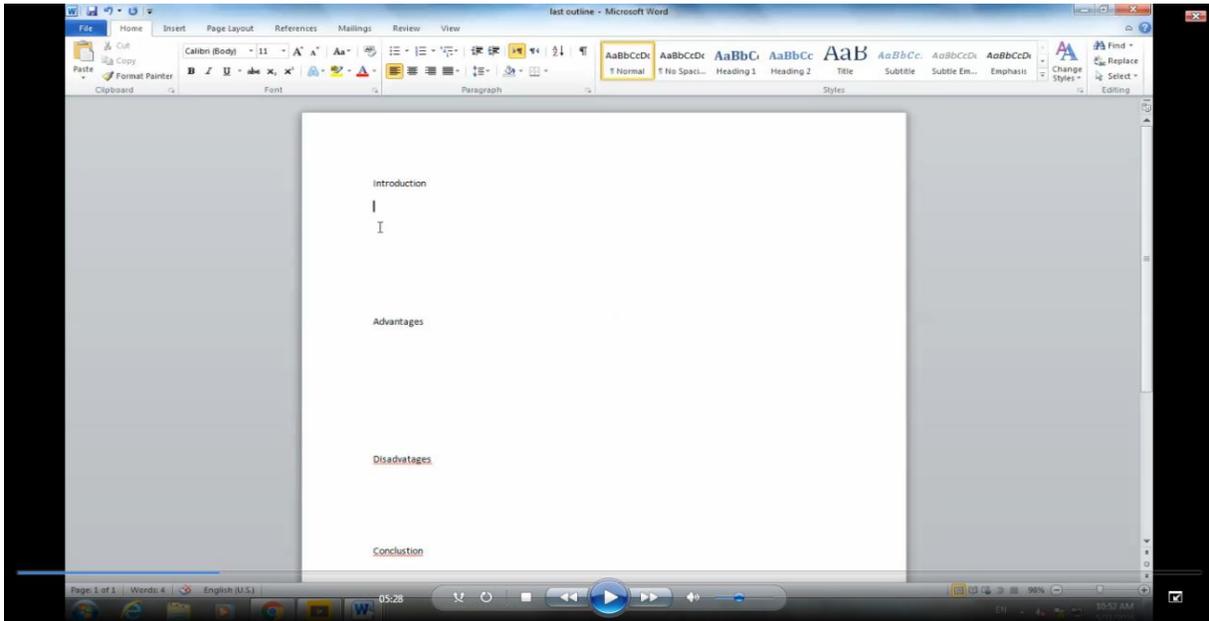
Figure 47: Addressing every Part of the Topic

2.   Deciding where he used the points as examples in his essay and putting notes in his entailed plan; Specifying each point the essay makes by writing the main point of part
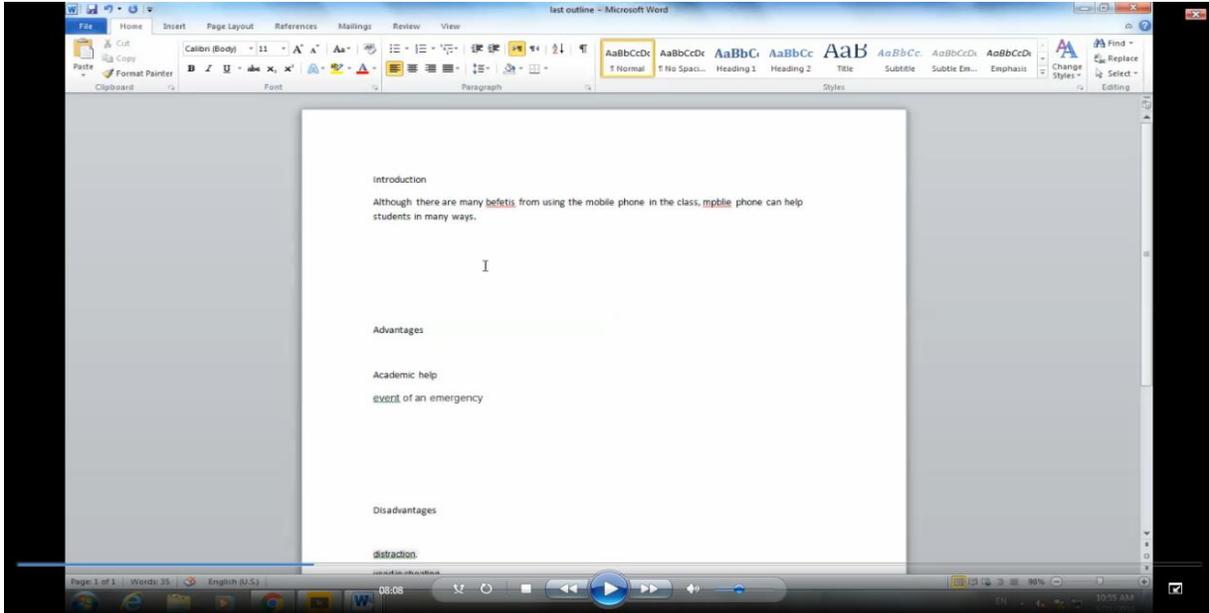
Figure 48: Specifying each Point the Essay

3.   Checking has not gone off track, and that the paragraphs are in the most logical order.
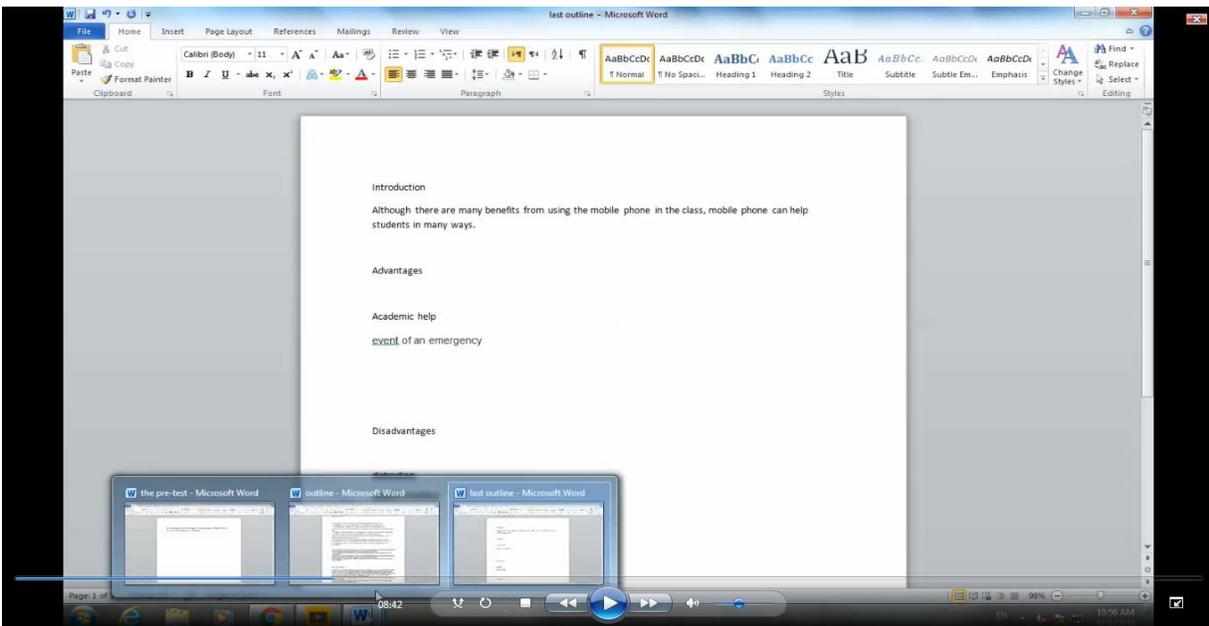
Figure 49: Checking Logical Order

In the first draft, he used the common strategies and then he did some reading to obtain additional knowledge about some issues. According to the revision step he used several strategies as it seems in below figures.
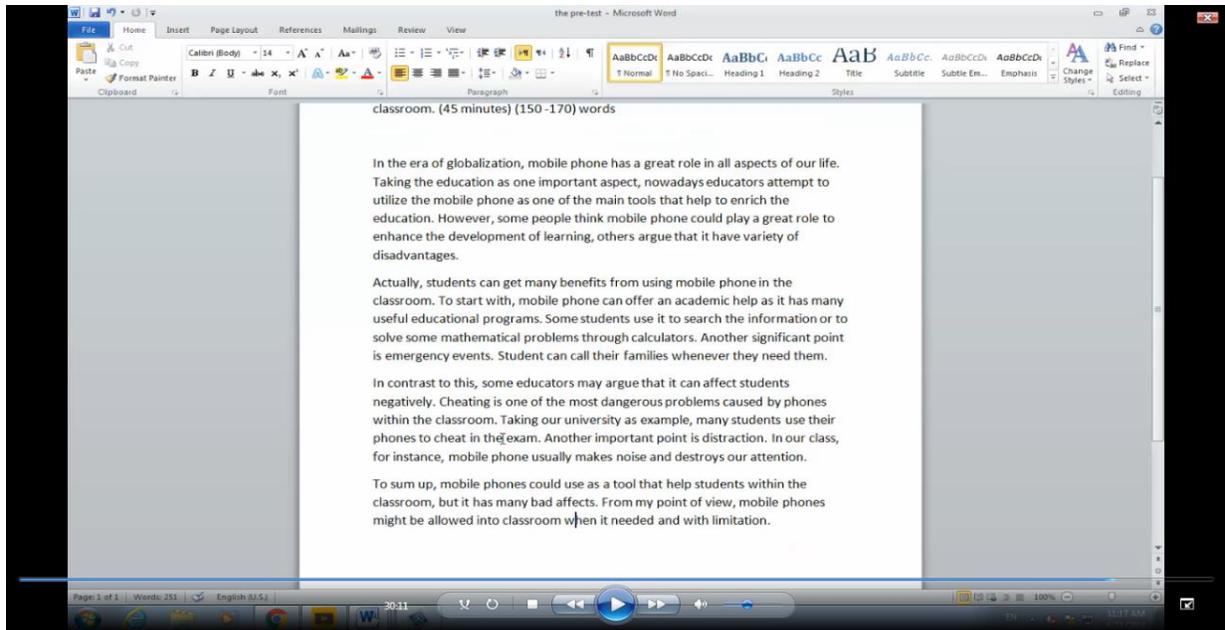
Figure 50: Tightening and Cleaning up the Language
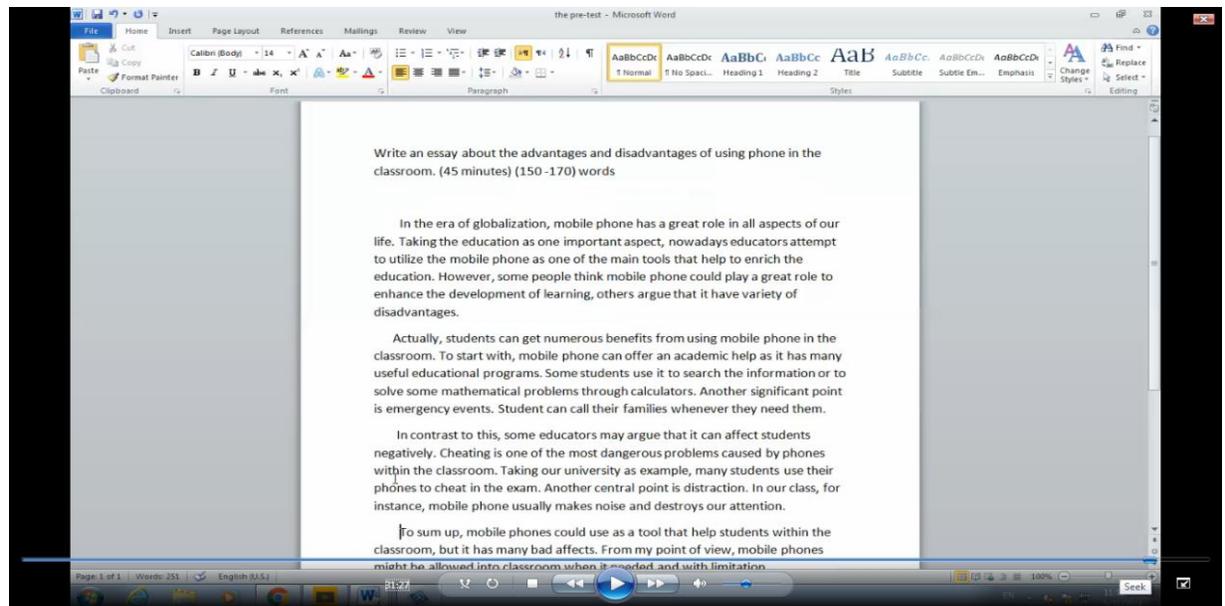
Figure 51: Organizing the Paragraphs (Font Face, Page Layout)
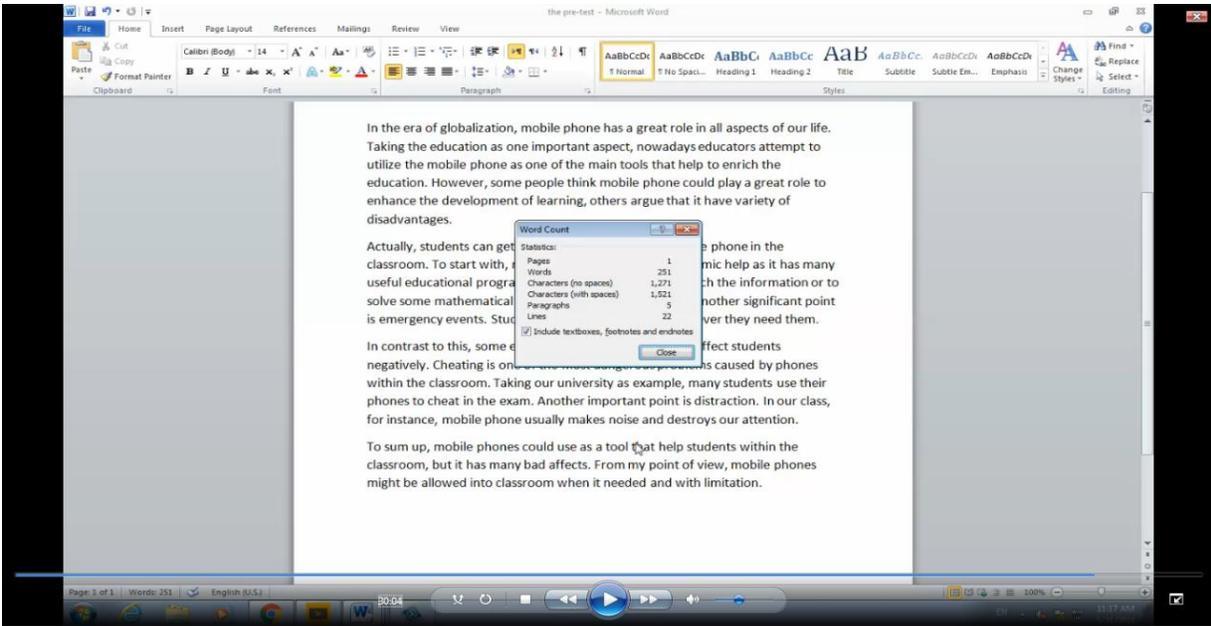
Figure 52: Checking the Amount of Words
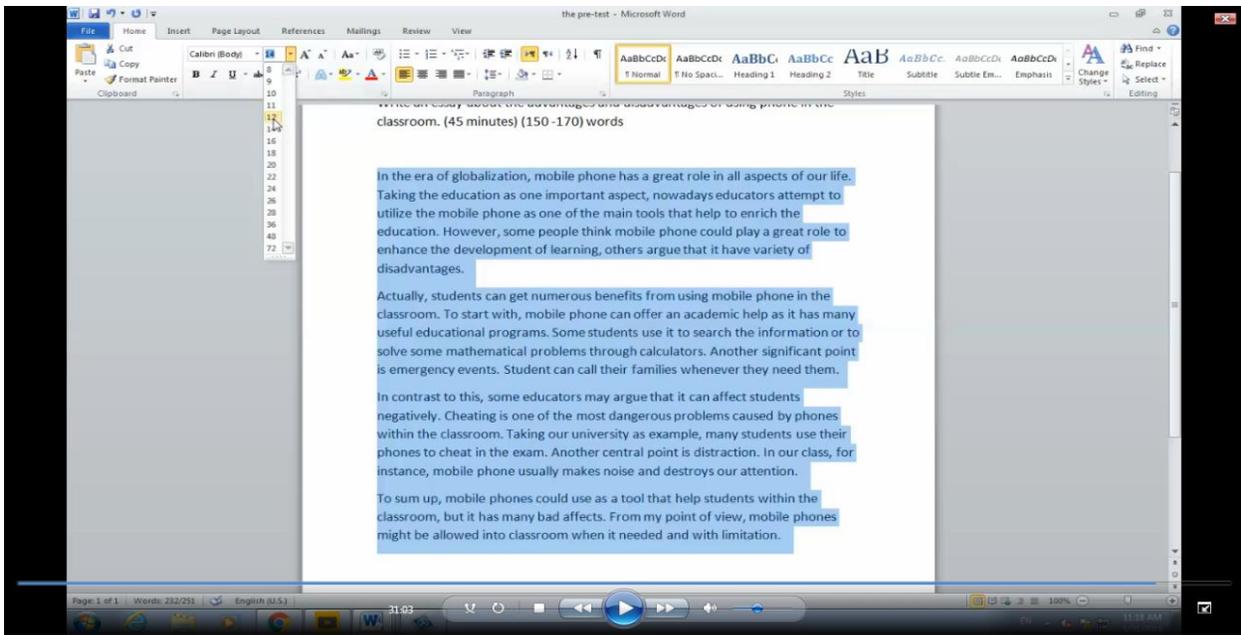
Figure 53: Checking the Style of the worlds
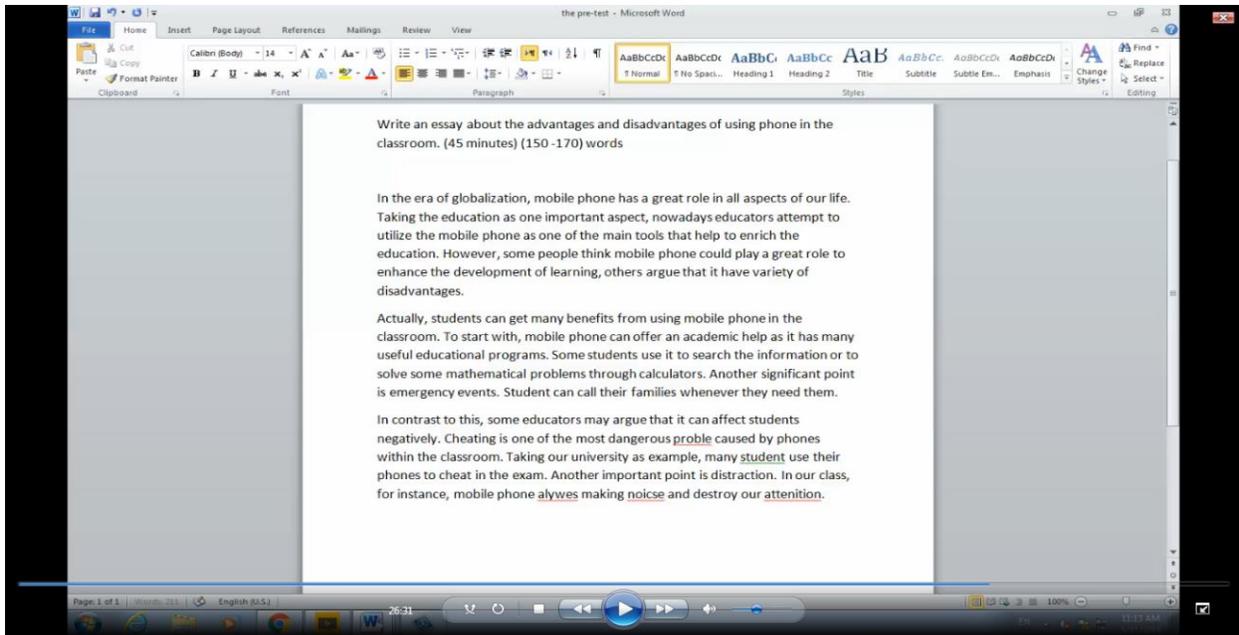
Figure 54: Cutting, Pasting and Deleting

In the editing step also he applied several strategies:

1.	Eliminating grammatical errors which are known through the electronic computer checker, he clicked right and chose the appropriate choice
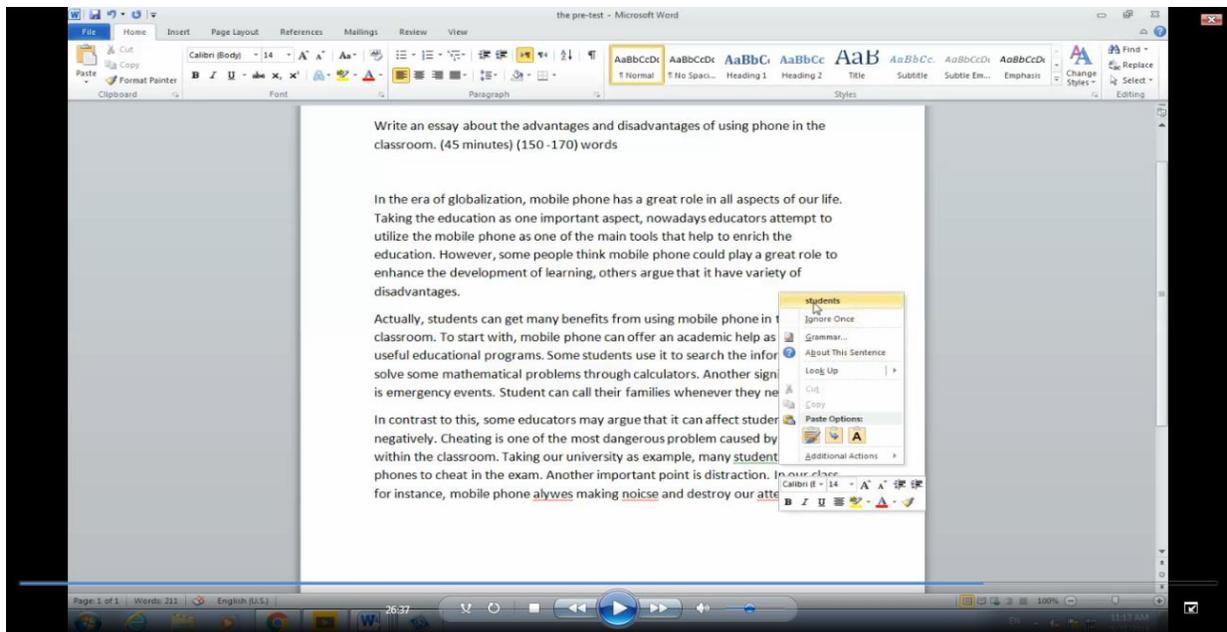
Figure 55: Eliminating Grammatical Errors

2.	Attempting to correct the spelling without using computer spell checker by delete and add letters
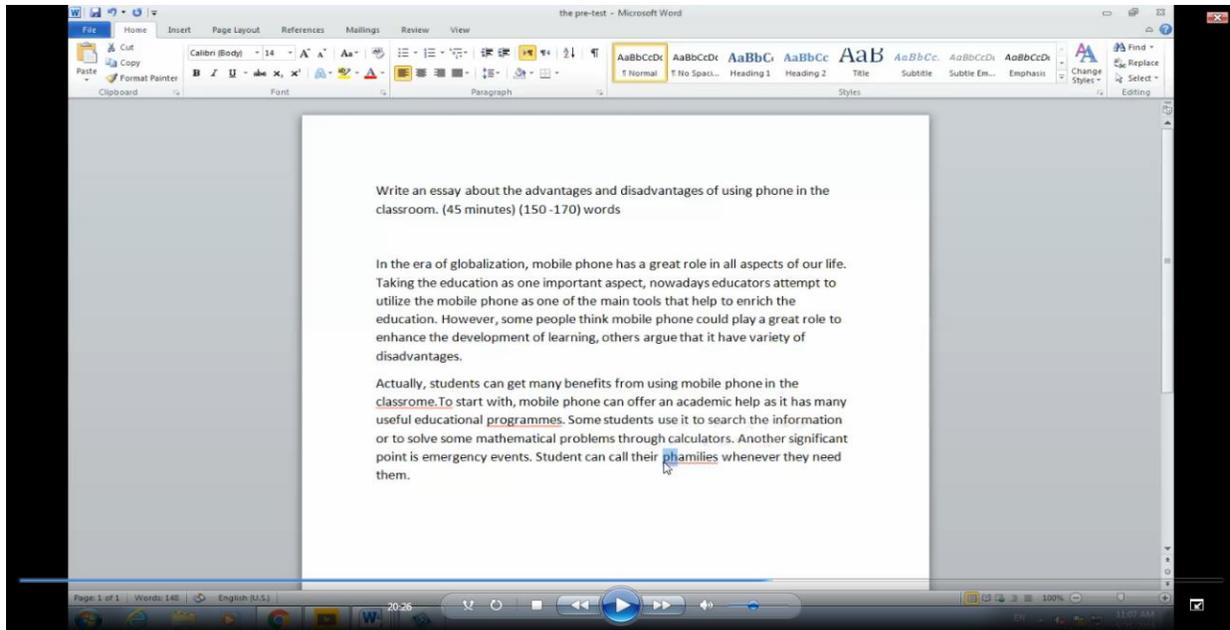
Figure 56: Using Computer Spell Checker

3. Using the computer grammatical checker programme which underlines any word that needs to be checked, he clicked right and chose the appropriate choice
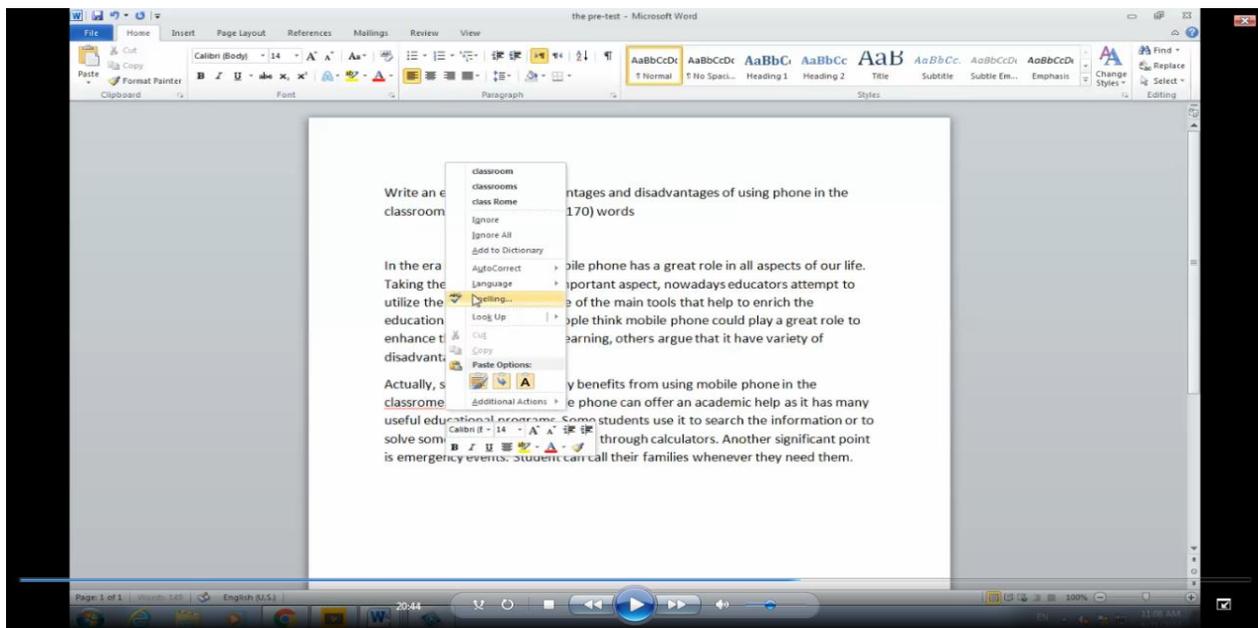
Figure 57: Using the Computer Grammatical Checker

4.   Using Word Choice techniques by clicking right and choose another word; Using (synonym)which is word that sound alike or nearly alike but has different spellings editing
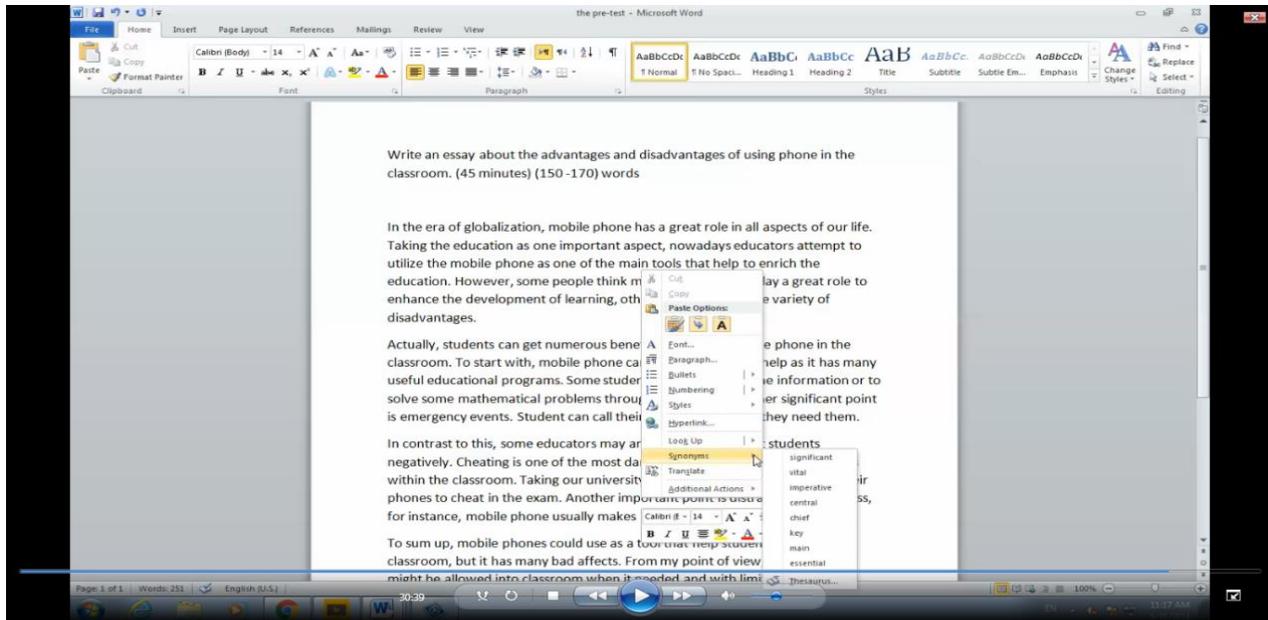
Figure 58: Using Word Choice Technique

Compared to the student F, he mainly did the similar strategies but he did not apply evaluating the plan and an additional reading. Regarding the editing step, he did not use many strategies; he has just use eliminating grammatical errors, using the computer spell checker and synonym.
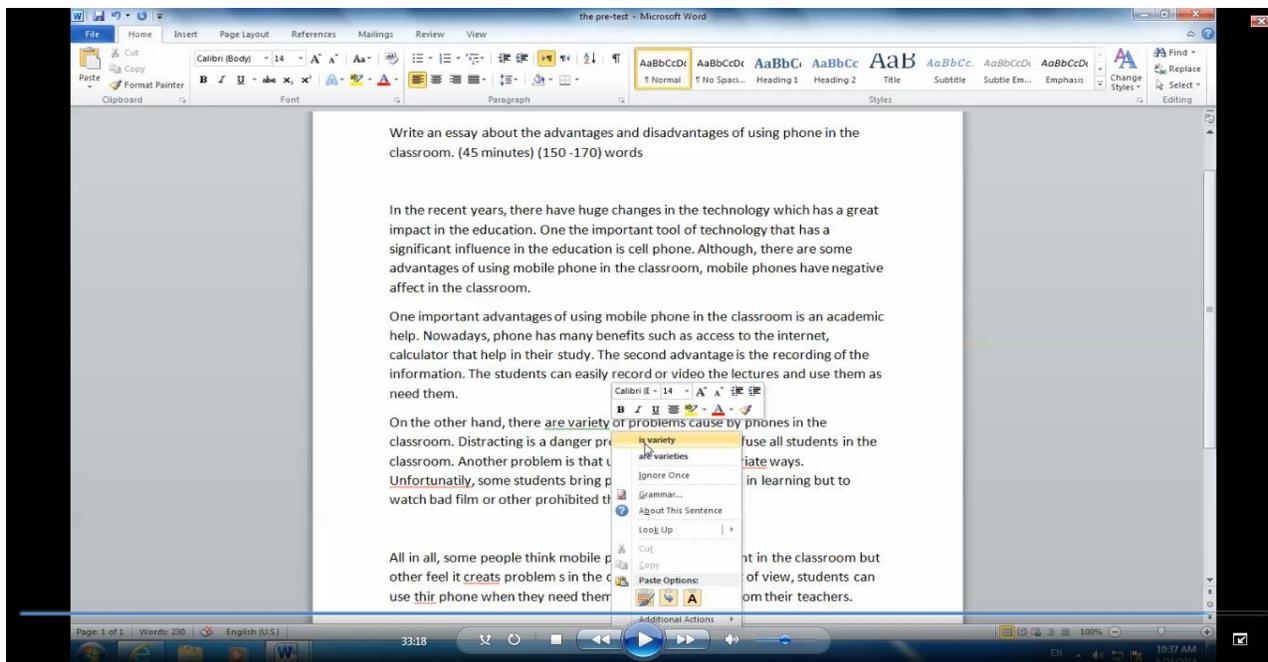
Figure 59: Cleaning up the Work

4.4 Stimulated Recall:

There are three interview guides for the stimulated recall interview (See appendix 3). The questions in the stimulated recall interview were based on the video recording of the writing process.

4.2.1 Weak Achievers

According to the student A who is considered the weakest student, he attempted to read about the topic in English but after that he turned to his first language (Arabic) because he stated that '*it is much easier and faster for me to read in my first language rather than reading in the second language*'. Although he highlighted some keys of the question, he did not fully understand the topic; he said '*I thought I supposed to write about general advantages and disadvantages of using phones but I didn't focus in the classroom*'. This is the reasons behind refusing to continue his work, he stated '*I spent most of the task's time in a wrong understanding and I will not have enough time to rewrite this task*'. Regarding the form of the whole task, he

admitted that 'I *know how the task is built and the structure of each task but I don't have enough words I am not that much strong in building the sentences'*.

Student B, on the other hand, immediately started writing the first draft without using any of pre-writing steps such as analyzing the topic, preliminary plan and reading about the topic because he said confidently ' *I did many practice for similar task and no need to waste our time in such things'*. The second reason as he admitted is '*I am very slow in typing so I have to go directly to the main stage, the first draft*'. According to the revising, he stated that "used cutting and pasting to revise" but he revise after each part to '*check if the ideas in the paper make sense*'. However, he didn't revise the whole work because '*I didn't have enough time as I took more than one hour to finish this work*'. In terms of editing, despite the electronic checker in the compute underlined the wrong spelling and grammatical mistakes, he edited only the Capitalization by changes the letters from capital to small because '*I don't know the strategies of editing the grammatical and spelling mistakes in computer*' he said.

All in all, the weight evidence support that weak students know some strategies but he they did not use them effectively. In the next section, the strategies that have been used by medium students will be illustrated.

4.2.2 Medium Achievers

The third student, C, generally stated that '*I know many strategies but I don't know when and where I should apply them*'. He started his wok by searching in the internet in his first language (Arabic) because he stated that '*it is much easier and faster for me to read in my first language rather than reading in the second language as I used to search about the topics in Arabic*'. Turning to revising, he stated that '*used cutting, pasting and deleting to revise" and he revised after each part and before he submitted his work to "check if the ideas in the paper make sense*'. Moreover, in the editing part he believed that '*since I used to use computer in my work, I was able to use variety of techniques in editing my work such as translation and electronic checker*'.

'*I can write very well, no need to use any of pre-writing steps such as analyze the topic, brainstorm the topic , preliminary plan and reading about the topic*' the student D said

assertively. According to revising and editing parts, he said confidently '*just I revised after each part to check if it makes sense*' and according to revising and editing before the publishing the work he stated that '*since I checked while I was writing it why I bothered myself and check it again*'.

It appears that, weak student and medium students are sharing some similar issues. To illustrate, both of the two groups have an idea about the strategies but issue is that they do not know how they apply them in correct ways. Next sections will clarify the strategies that have been used by strong students.

4.2.3 Strong Achievers

Regarding to the good achiever students E and F, in general, they believe that '*each step has its own benefits in the writing process*' student F said, '*I attempted to apply all steps to improve my writing*' student E stated. The student F said '*I created to outline to facilitate my work*', while student E argued '*I made the first outline to gather as possible as I could from the information and I evaluated and organized them in the second outline*'. Both of them used a synonym strategy because '*strong words make my writing stronger*' student F said whereas student E stated '*I don't want to repeat same words*'. Furthermore, "*I sometimes prefer to use some spelling techniques such as adding or deleing a letter instead of using electronic checker in order to improve my spelling*' student E said. This is briefly the data that has been collected in this study, and the next chapter attempts to analyze such information.

Based on the result above, it seems that participants with different levels of language proficiency have gone through variety of writing steps and strategies during their writing. Moreover, they used different order in employing the writing steps which influence their language proficiency. The next chapter to discuss some issues based on such results.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This chapter attempts to provide general discussion based on the results of the study. This chapter is divided thematically into two sections; namely, mismatch of writing process between different groups of student, mismatch of writing strategies between different groups of students and negative correlation between language proficiency and product quality.

5.1 Different Writing Process between Different Groups of Student

In general, students went through different number of writing steps. Students E (a high achiever) employed 8 steps, meaning that he knows at least 8 steps, while students A, B, C, and D used only 5 steps. The reason that the second groups (medium and low achievers) used fewer writing steps means that they do not know as many steps as the high achievers knew. Moreover, although some students in second groups (medium and low achievers) used several steps, they did not apply them effectively. This can be seen when they used reading about the topic, revising and editing steps, they used only during their writing and did not apply them at the end of their work.

According to the order of writing steps, the data show that the order weak and medium achievers used each step is fixed. This can be seen when step 4 occurs once in A's work and two times in E's work. Another example is revising and editing steps, both students E and F applied them twice, whereas students A, B and D used them only one time in their work. While students E and F employed such steps during their writing and at the end of their performance, others did not apply them when they finished their works.

In conclusion, it seems that high achievers knew more steps than other groups. Moreover, they went back and forth to previous steps again, while others went through the step linearly. Using more steps and applying them in suitable order have a great impact in the language proficiency. To illustrate this point, high achievers applied more steps many times, whereas some the other two groups did not apply them. Therefore, high achievers have achieved a better performance than others.

5.2 Mismatch of Writing Strategies between Different Groups of Students:

There are several strategies used by different groups of students during their composition. It is evident that students E and F know more strategies that do the rest. That is, both know and use at least 7 strategies in step 4, while the weak and medium proficient students used only 2 strategies. Strategies used in step 7 also support this point; low achievers only used one strategy as well as the medium achiever who applied 3 strategies. On another hand, high proficient students employed five strategies. In addition, it should be noted that high achievers used the same strategies in different steps. For example, in the step 6 (additional reading) they attempted to use the similar strategies of step 4.

This chapter provides discussion regarding the different writing process between groups of student and mismatch of writing strategies between different groups of student. According to the discussion above, writing steps and strategies, which relate to language proficiency, have a huge influence in the second language products. Next chapter attempts to clarify some issue regarding the writing in EFL classrooms, teachers of L2 writing, recommendation for future research and what the researcher has learned from this study.

5.3 Tools that the Three Groups Used

The result shows that students applied a variety of tools and skills during their writing. Some students used good skills which might help them to achieve good English proficiency. Problem solving skills have appeared in the good achievers' works. Students E and F experienced difficulties, such as spelling and grammatical problems. Notwithstanding this, they were able to solve them. Another skill is 'Decision Making' which was illustrated in some students' performance. Although the task was limited to 45 minutes, some students such as C, E and F were able to complete their work as they did not take a long time in deciding what to write. Additionally, when they were googling something, there was a list of possible links or suggestions, but they did not waste time choosing link or suggestion they should follow. This leads to another skill which is researching skills. The high achiever could choose the appropriate websites and skim the links whiteout wasting their time scanning the information.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This study was conducted to investigate the writing steps and the strategies that GFP students use in the writing skill. Throughout the discussion section, it was obvious that there is a mismatch between the strong students and others in terms of the writing process and strategies that students usually go through. In addition, negative correlation between language proficiency and product quality had appeared in two cases. This chapter aims to provide an overview about writing in EFL classrooms, teachers of L2 writing and some recommendations for future research.

6.1 Writing in EFL Classrooms

Based on the results, strong achievers have used various steps of writing which impact the quality of their work. In addition, the products of the strong achievers indicate the interaction between steps which seems within three four steps; namely, preliminary plan, Reading on the topic revision and editing. Regarding the preliminary plan, they started their work by planning and organizing the work in a separate sheet. This was followed by reading about the topic and gathering the basic background about the topic. Before they moved to write the task, they evaluated and reformed the plan in order to create a better organized plan that facilitates doing the writing task. Another interaction took place in the reading step; they did the first reading before they started writing the task. Since then, after they finished the task, they went again to make additional reading to look for more evidence to support the points. The interaction of the revision and edition steps was clear when the students revise and edit their work after each section and at the end of their work, before they saved their products.

According to the writing strategies, based on the results, strong achievers did not only use a wider range of strategies, but also they applied them properly in different writing steps. Therefore, their written products are better than other groups. It is recommended that such steps and strategies should be introduced to weak and medium achievers. Teachers should provide such steps and strategies while they teach their students writing skill.

6.2 Teachers of L2 Writing

Teacher is considered as one of the main aspect that helps to improve writing skill, particularly writing process and strategies. If the teachers can encourage their students to use writing steps and strategies commendably, the language proficiency of the student will improve. The teacher's first role should be to participate in developing a fully integrated curriculum which enables us to teach writing strategies effectively. Teachers could teach some strategies and process, so students can use when writing by themselves. For instance, what high achievers did in terms of steps and strategies during their writing should be introduced to lower achievers. Moreover, they can provide some group discussion before asking them to write. Peer feedback activities and self-evaluation might be used through teaching writing skill. All such steps above might lead to better language proficiency.

6.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Since this project was conducted as a case study, further studies are required to be carried out with a larger number of participants for more investigation and experiments in order to probe the effectiveness of the subject matter. Moreover, further researches need to be conducted with varied proficiency levels and participants from different language backgrounds to investigate the influence their culture and language on the writing step and the selection of strategies.

6.4 Knowledge and Experience the Researcher Gains from this Study

This study is a powerful form of professional development which influences the researchers' theoretical knowledge and practical practice. This research enables the researcher to follow his interests and his needs as he investigates what his students do. It expands and enriches his teaching skills, particularly writing skill, and puts him in collaborative contact with peers that have a like interest in such study. Moreover, the researcher has learned variety of steps and strategies in writing process that enable him to provide a better teaching for his students, in particularly writing skill. He could easily know the challenges that face his students and how he

advises his students to overcome such problems. He might develop the writing curriculum and materials that suit his students.

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Appendix 1:

Marks	Descriptors			
	Task Achievement	**Organization**	**Lexis**	**Grammar and mechanics**
11-12	Task achieved, however some parts may be more fully covered than others. - 250 words - Essay structure including an introduction with a correct and relevant general statement followed with a relevant and correct thesis statement. - Two-body paragraphs opened each with a clear, relevant and accurate topic sentence. - Relevant main ideas are found, however some of them may be inadequately developed or unclear. - A relevant position is found though there may be some repetition in the conclusion or insufficient clarity.	clearly organized: - There is an overall progress. - Information and ideas are arranged coherently. - Cohesive devices are used effectively, although cohesion within and/or between sentences may be faulty or mechanical.	- There is a sufficient range of vocabulary totally relevant to the task. - There is an attempt to use less common vocabulary, yet some inaccuracy may occur. - Some errors in spelling and/or word formation may be found but they do not reduce communication.	- There is a variation in simple and complex sentences. - Very few errors in grammar and punctuation which do not impede communication.
8-10	Task achieved partially - There may be a failure in meeting the required number of words but not critically. - A position is expressed though development may lack clarity and conclusion may not be drawn. - Some main ideas are presented however these may be limited or lack development; the reader may come across some irrelevant details.	- There may be some organization but may lack the overall progression. - The use of cohesive devices may be inadequate, inaccurate or over-used. - May be repetitive. - Paragraphing may be inadequate or not clear.	- A limited range of vocabulary minimally adequate for the task. - Noticeable errors in spelling and/or word formation may be found; they may cause some difficulty for the reader.	- Only a limited range of structures is used. - There are several attempts in producing complex sentences but less accurately than simple ones. - Grammar and punctuation errors may occur frequently but causing only little or no difficulty for the reader.
6-7	A tangential response to the task - A position presented but with little clarity. - Some main ideas but with a lack of clarity; these may be repetitive, or inadequately developed.	- Information and ideas presented may not be arranged coherently and progression in the response may fail in clarity. - Some basic cohesive devices are used however they may be inaccurate or repetitive. - The use of paragraphs may be confusing	- Only basic vocabulary is used; may be repetitive or lack appropriateness to the task. - A limited control of word formation and/or spelling; some strain in communication may be caused by errors.	- Only a very limited range of structures is used with a rare use of subordinate clauses. - There are some accurate structures; however errors in grammar and punctuation do exist.
4-5	- No part of the task is addressed adequately. - Position is not clearly expressed. - Only few ideas are developed; these are largely undeveloped or irrelevant.	- Ideas are not logically organized. - A very limited range of cohesive devices is used with a possibility of no logical relationship between ideas.	- The range of words and expressions used is very limited. - A very limited control of word formation and/or spelling errors may severely distort the message.	Forming sentences attempted however the predominance of errors in grammar and punctuation distort the meaning.
2-3	Very little is made to achieve the task. - No position expressed	- A very limited control over organizational features.	- An extremely limited range of vocabulary	- Inability to form sentences except in

1	- one or two ideas may be presented but with no development - Answer is completely not/ barely related to the task.	- Fails to communicate any message.	- No control of word formation and/or spelling - very common vocabulary and used inaccurately - wrong spelling and word formation	memorized phrases. - Cannot use sentence forms at all.
0	**No attempt at all / task question copied/ a totally memorized response**			

Appendix 2:

Stages	Weak Achievers		Medium Achievers		Strong Achievers	
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Analyze the topic						
Brainstorm the topic						
Preliminary plan						
Reading on the topic						
Reflect, evaluate and refine the plan						
First draft						
Additional reading						
Revising						
Editing						

Appendix 3:

1- Why did you act in this way?

2- Did any other options come into your mind?

3- What did you think in that time?