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The
British University
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**A Balanced Approach Towards Teaching the Skills of L2
Reading and Writing to Enhance the Writing Proficiency
of Foundation Program Students at Universities in the
UAE**

مساق اللغة الانجليزية الاستدراكي في جامعات الامارات العربية المتحدة: نهج
متوازن في تدريس مهارتي القراءة والكتابة لتطوير مهارات الطلاب الكتابية

by

FATHIA HASAN ALFARAN

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION**

at

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May 2023



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ABSTRACT

The current study aims to investigate the effectiveness of balancing reading and writing instruction in foundation programs and how that affects learners' essay writing skills in higher education institutions in the UAE. To achieve this goal, two research questions are formulated to drive the inquiry: What are the foundations program instructors' perceptions and practices regarding the balance of teaching L2 reading and writing? How does the balance in teaching L2 reading and writing enhance foundation programs learners' writing performance in higher educational institution in the UAE? In the current study, the mixed methods approach is employed to assess classroom practices to investigate whether there is a balance in teaching reading and writing so as to strengthen the learners' performance in these two skills; and examines whether these practices improve foundation programs learners' essay-writing skills in higher education institutions. The quantitative data have been collected from teachers' questionnaire to answer the first question. The qualitative data have been collected from an experiment that consists of a pre-posttest to answer the research second question. The results of the intervention and the achievement tests, instructors' questionnaire and interviews revealed that the techniques used in the balanced reading and writing teaching program are suitable for first-year students and can be implemented if the instructors get appropriate training from knowledgeable people.

Keywords: reading skills. Writing skills, teaching methods, balanced approach

ملخص الدراسة

تهدف الدراسة الحالية الى بحث مدى فاعلية الموازنة بين تدريس مهارتي القراءة و الكتابة في البرنامج الاستدراكي، ومدى تأثير ذلك على مهارات كتابة المقالات لدى الدارسين في جامعات وكليات التعليم العالي في دولة الامارت العربية المتحدة. ولتحقيق اهداف الدراسة قامت الباحثة بصياغة سؤاليين لقيادة عملية البحث: ما هي تصورات وممارسات معلمي البرنامج الاستدراكي فيما يتعلق بتحقيق التوازن بين تدريس القراءة والكتابة للغة الثانية (اللغة الانجليزية)؟ كيف يؤدي التوازن في تدريس القراءة والكتابة للغة الثانية إلى تعزيز مهارات الكتابة لمتعلمي البرامج الاستدراكي في مؤسسات التعليم العالي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة؟ وللوصول الى الهدف المنشود اتبعت الباحثة الأسلوب البحثي المختلط لتقييم الممارسات الصفية للمدرسين لمعرفة اذا كان هناك توازن في تدريس مهارتي الكتابة والقراءة في اللغة الانجليزية لتعزيز أداء الطلاب في هاتين المهارتين. بالإضافة الى ذلك قامت باختبار ما اذا كانت هذه الممارسات تعمل على تحسين مهارات الكتابة المقالية لدى الدارسين في البرنامج الاستدراكي في جامعات وكليات التعليم العالي. ولاجابة السؤال البحثي الاول تم جمع البيانات الكمية من استبيان وزع على معلمي البرنامج الاستدراكي. أما السؤال الثاني فقد تم اجابته بعد جمع بيانات نوعية من تجربة تكونت من خضوع الدارسين لبرنامج متوازن في تدريس مهارتي الكتابة والقراءة ومن اختبار تم اخذه قبل و بعد التجربة. أظهرت نتائج التجربة والاختبارات التحصيلية واستبيانات المعلمين ومقابلاتهم أن التقنيات المستخدمة في برنامج تعليم القراءة والكتابة المتوازن مناسبة لطلاب السنة الأولى ويمكن تنفيذها إذا حصل المعلمون على التدريب المناسب من ذوي المعرفة والاختصاص.

الكلمات الدلالية: مهارات القراءة، مهارات الكتابة، أساليب التدريس، النهج المتوازن.

DEDICATION

With love to my kids Lamar and Sondos
It is never too late to follow your dreams.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ELE	English Language Learning
UAE	United Arab Emirates
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
ESL	English as a Second Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
EMI	English-Medium Instruction
CEFR	Common Framework of Reference for Languages
EmSAT	The Emirates Standardized Test
EBP	English Bridging Program
ECP	English Communications Program
MOE	Ministry of Education
MoHESR	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
HCT	Higher Colleges of Technology
UAEU	United Arab Emirates University
ZU	Zayed University
IT	Information Technology
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment Program
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
TIMMS	Trends in Mathematics and Science Study
IELTS	International English Language Testing Service
CAA	Commission of College Accreditation
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
CBT	Computer-based TOFEL
iBT	International Benchmark Test
CEPA	Common Educational Placement Assessment
UK	United Kingdom

USA	United States of America
ADEK	Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge
CERT	Center of Excellence for Applied Research and Training
ADEC	Abu Dhabi Educational Council
ASP	Academic Support Program
PD	Professional Development
TPB	Theory of Planned Behavior
AQA	Agency of Quality Assurance
GARD	General Academic Requirements Division
PTL	Program Team Leader
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
BUID	British University in Dubai
ANCOVA	Analysis of Covariance
EAP	English for Academic Purposes

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background for the current study. It also involves ELE in UAE higher education institutions, as well as Foundation Program in UAE higher education institutions. Additionally, it includes reading in correlation with writing, the study's rationale, the purpose of the study and research questions, the statement of the problem, and the significance of the study.

1.1 Background

The English language has been considered as the language of technology, politics, and commerce (Guilbert, Alamargot, & Morin, 2019). Reading and writing are two essential skills that serve multiple purposes. They are important to communicate with others, acquire and share knowledge, and develop rapport. Learners especially in higher education institutions (HEI) and universities use reading skill to search for information presented in their printed material, while writing is used to evaluate the acquired knowledge and sharpen students' learning (Perrotta, Czerniewicz & Beetham, 2016).

As noted by Palmis, Danna, Velay, and Longcamp (2017), due to the widespread use of English as a lingua franca in many countries, it has been incorporated into school as a major subject and has been used as a medium of instruction in the majority of tertiary institutions and universities. Therefore, learning English requires mastery of the four skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

According to Smith (2020), writing is considered as an instrument of communication between the writer and the reader. Some researchers see it as a rather more sophisticated skill compared with the other linguistic skills. Jiménez and Hernández-Cabrera (2019) have defined writing in two ways: formally and functionally. The formal definition sees writing as a visible representation of human language when it is portrayed as “the recording of human communication using signs or symbols to represent the spoken words” (Jiménez and Hernández-Cabrera, 2019, p.5); while the functional definition describes writing as a communicative instrument.

In the twentieth century, the study of language tended to focus on the speaking skill that was preferred by a number of linguists such as DeSaussure and Chomsky who neglected writing skills and this situation led to reading and writing skills being ignored in language teaching for long time (Graham *et. al.*, 2020). The significance of reading and writing skills has been recognized in the 21st century, but there has been considerable concern that students, in particular those who are doing their undergraduate studies, do not have sufficient language skills to be successful in the digital-based world (Suskie, 2018). Nowadays, English as Second Language (ESL) specialists have become more conscious of the importance of these two skills especially for non-native English writers who are doing their undergraduate studies. They give three reasons for considering writing as an essential skill: it is the field of specialization for international linguists; research studies and articles are published in English; and thousands of international undergraduates pursue their degrees in countries where the English language predominates (Kim *et al.*, 2018).

According to Nikoopour and Bargnil (2020), there are two perspectives on the benefits that students gain from learning reading and writing skills. The first one is that reading gives the learners an opportunity to be adventurous with the language as it motivates them to think, criticize, analyze, and organize their ideas. The second perspective is that writing reinforces learners' ability to express their ideas using different grammatical structures and vocabulary, which strengthens students' reflection and their command of English.

The revolution in technology, globalization, information and the internet has fostered the need for reading and writing in English (Lu *et al.*, 2020). Undergraduate students in some tertiary institutions, especially in the remote areas of the UAE, are poor writers. They do not know how to write a unified, understandable, and coherent essay with reasonable and justifiable progress of ideas. The current study aims to explore the efficiency of balancing reading and writing teaching in Foundation Programs and how that could affect learners' essay writing skills in HEI in the UAE. A balance in teaching reading and writing means giving an equal attention to both skills and not focusing on one skill.

In the field of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL), language experts and researchers have recently recognized the significance of reading

skills to develop learners' writing proficiency (Linuwih, 2020). Alves *et al.* (2016) have traced back the connection between reading and writing in the history of ESL research by analyzing Cummins' theory in which he suggests a transfer in literacy from L1 to L2. Linuwih proposes that teachers especially in higher education should adopt an integrated language teaching approach that is based on modern empirical research not only to teach reading and writing, but also to improve other language skills such as listening and speaking. A number of research studies such as (Atayeva *et al.*, 2019) and (Luke, 2020) affirm the necessity of connecting reading skills with writing proficiency as the activation of one domain could lead to activate the others.

In the UAE (particularly in the Western Region), being able to read academic texts in English is considered a big challenge faced by second-language learners studying at tertiary institutions that use English-Medium Instruction. In addition, to accomplish their academic tasks, Foundation Program students are required to give big efforts to write competently. English teachers expect that essay writing is supposed to be a simple and effortless assignment for university students. Writing in a foreign language (English) could be hard for first year students. Learners at this stage would feel frustrated especially when they make an effort to produce an essay, yet they do not obtain the grade that they hope to get. This would happen as their writing does not fulfill the criteria of academic writing that the instructor has determined. This led many first-year learners to dislike essay writing simply for the reason that learning this skill is not rewarding. To assist students enhance their writing proficiency, the instructor can use one of the reading strategies as "the connection between reading and writing is powerful. When the teacher creatively uses suitable reading material, the writing curriculum can be enhanced. If the students are exposed to good literature, they will be able to disseminate their robust reading mastery to their own writing." (Olness, 2005, p. 9).

1.2 ELE in UAE higher education institutions

English language has been used as a medium of instruction in the majority of higher education institutions (public & private) in the UAE during the 1990s. Accordingly, undergraduate students need to have satisfactory English language proficiency as a pre-requisite to fulfill the requirements of their degree in both public and private tertiary institutions.

To enhance the process of imparting knowledge and skills, the UAE government has flowed large resources into English language instruction at school, institution, and university levels (Thomas, Piquette, & McMaster, 2016). Even so, these efforts have not given the desired outcomes as learners graduate from high school with unsatisfactory English level. The factors of learners' weakness in English language in school level have been stated by Thomas *et al.* (2016). He yielded it to unproductive teachers, improper curricula, unengaged learners, lack of exposure to English outside the learning environment, and having poor school system. Ahmad (2016) has found that in school level, English language classes are teacher-centered, textbook based, and taught to memorize and pass. The exam-based system that encourages teaching through memorization is one of the factors that led to learners' weakness in the English language (Mahbub & Hadina, 2021). This would explain the limited knowledge of functional language of first year students. Since education provided to students in schools does not prepare them for higher education, the majority of them are required to enter the Foundation Program. Bayyurt and Altinmakas (2012) conducted a study in Business College where they observed that it was difficult for undergraduates to understand the lecture topic, unable to express their opinion, and do not understand exams' questions in courses taught in English. They concluded that because students are afraid of making mistakes, they avoid participating in class discussions.

Due to educational reforms and policies, English language education in UAE universities and institutions has dramatically changed in the last 5 years (Chell, Mikkila-Erdmann, Iiskala, & Dillon, 2021). The law of higher education in the UAE has introduced and defined the goals of the process of teaching and learning the English language in elementary, secondary, and university education. Subsequently, the methodological aspects of this process have been highlighted by Curricular Guidelines of English language education. The radical turn in the process of teaching and learning the English language urged the stakeholders to cultivate the frame of the fundamental standards for English language skills and issued The Fundamental Standards of English Education. The new regulations present essential modifications that involve discourses of second language, setting new criteria and evaluations to assess English teachers' proficiencies, knowledge, abilities and capabilities related to communication skills. It also involves specifications about English language courses that will be taught at tertiary institutions (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2019).

Obviously, this change directly affects English language teachers and university students, and it raises several issues. For the standards of language teaching and learning, the Common Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is applied, but it does not sufficiently reflect the students' needs (Deveci & Wyatt, 2022). Most of the general studies courses are not suitable for the needs of university students (Qin, 2020). Generally, different aspects have to be considered when planning to enhance the process of English language teaching and learning such as "Taking into consideration the region's economic development urgencies; respecting people's knowledge and culture; and considering the regular and structural enhancement of the governmental system that could depend on different necessities that impact both public and private schools, teachers, and students in the country" (Deveci & Wyatt, 2022, p. 52).

The current English language policy poses many challenges. The most prominent is the students' limited proficiency in English and its causes, with a strong association between Arabic-medium education and the linguistic and pedagogical challenges encountered in tertiary education (Mouhanna 2016; McGlennon 2015; Morrow 2017). Other common themes are educational reforms, bilingual education and Arabic-language loss (Weber 2011; Tabari 2014). The pedagogical tensions created within the classroom due to the epistemological, cultural, political and professional paradigms that underpin 'Western' and 'Arab-Islamic' educational traditions have also received considerable scholarly attention (Weber 2011; Freimuth 2014). In addition, many publications have focused on the threat that English poses to the linguistic, religious, cultural and social identities of local students and their resistance to Western values (Diallo 2014; Holes 2011). This requires the government to provide adequate equipment to teaching staff to examine their practices and experiences in various circumstances and assess its effect on the process of teaching and learning. Accordingly, investigating teachers' practices in English classes would be a need to find out whether these practices affect students' English language development.

1.3 Foundation Program in UAE Higher education institutions

Since English is used as a medium of instruction at the majority of higher education institutions in the UAE, learners are required to have adequate language ability to study in English. Therefore, Foundation Program has been created to aid first year students enhancing

their proficiency in English language by providing non-credit course. This program assesses higher education learners to improve their communication skills that include reading, writing, speaking, and listening to get them ready for higher studies in various areas of their majors. The material used in Foundation Program is prepared by program teachers and all assessments are carried out in English. Meeting the English language requirement is necessary for students who finished high school to be admitted in the specialized programs. However, students who did not meet the institution requirement are supposed to enroll in Foundation Program. This program is offered for one academic year (three semesters). All semesters last for 16 weeks except summer semester which lasts for 6 weeks as it is an intensive term.

Foundation Program consists of four levels. Level one and two have been designed for very weak students. Learners whose EmSAT score is below 500 have to join level 1, while students whose EmSAT score is 500 – 700 have to join level two. Students in those two levels have 20 contact hours per week. On the other hand, level 3 has been designed for those who have got 725 – 875 in EmSAT test and level four is for students who have got 900 – 1075. Learners in level three have 15 contact hours per week, while level 4 students have only 10 contact hours. Learners need to get 60% of the total assessment score to pass a level.

Instructors need to have a master's degree with a minimum of three year-experience of teaching in higher education to join the program. They are expected to teach 24 hours a week, in addition to two office hours for students to meet their teachers. Students are not allowed to enroll in their specialized undergraduate program unless they pass level four.

1.4 Reading in correlation with writing

A large number of researchers have described reading skills as an isolated class activity (Graham, Liu, Bartlett, Harris, Aitken, Barkel, Kavanaugh, & Talukdar, 2018). Carrell (1988) has viewed it as an act that is accompanied by other linguistic skills such as writing. An acceptable definition has been presented by Milad (2017) who introduced reading as a mutual process that intervenes in meaning creation from the printed texts. Consequently, creating meaning is the result of inaccessible arrangements between both reading and writing skills. The interaction of both reading and writing will help communicate the meaning if the reader reads

to analyze different parts in a text, generalizes what he/she reads to his/her own experience, and evaluates what he/she reads.

Meishar-Tal and Shonfeld (2019) have created a strategy for teaching writing named critical reading to help English language instructors in Korea improve their learners' writing performance. They claim that this technique is beneficial, effective and positive as the results showed that the instructors were able to improve the writing skills of their students using this strategy. The effect of comprehensive reading on the enhancement of writing skills of EFL learners in terms of grammatical accuracy has been investigated by Shonfeld and Meishar-Tal (2016). Their findings revealed that comprehensive reading significantly enhanced the grammatical accuracy of the first-year students.

Many research studies have emphasized the connection between reading and writing skills, and clarified the merits of a balance in teaching reading and writing but this has been found in school's level (Nation & Macalister, 2020; Graham, 2020). In higher education institutions, a small number of instructors use printed texts to improve learners' performance writing skills (Wyse & Bradbury, 2022; Gunnerud et.al., 2020).

1.5 The rationale of the study

In teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), it is observed that higher education teachers usually keep in mind that they should enable variety of learning opportunities in which they can offer students, especially those who are in their foundation year, new forms of communication that are needed to dynamically participate in their diverse society (Semeraro *et al.*, 2019). To achieve this goal, two strategies are used in teaching English language: form-focused teaching and meaning-focused teaching (Rajendram, 2015). In form-focused teaching, the emphasis is on teaching grammar rules, sentence structure, how to increase learners' vocabulary bank, and the language sounds; while in meaning-focus teaching the attention is driven towards the use of the language, communication fluency, and expressions' appropriateness in various situations. The focus on reading and writing could lead to merging the outcomes of both form-focused teaching and meaning-focused teaching as the application of one strategy without the other may affect the desired outcomes (Neely, 2017).

Reading is learnt before writing and it can be defined as the learner's ability to change the written codes into spoken ones (Suskie, 2018). On the contrary, writing is viewed as an important skill since it can provide evidence about learners' achievement, and it plays an effective role in reinforcing the oral linguistic skills. The writer directs his/her focus either onto the topic of the written text, onto the reader, or focuses on his/her personal attitude and thoughts, employing different types of writing that would be expressive, poetic, informative, or persuasive (Artar, 2017).

The writing proficiency of first year students especially who live in Aldafrah reign in the UAE is way below the international standards. The insufficiency of English language mastery can be portrayed as a dilemma these students face. According to Ghabool, Edwina, and Kashef, (2012, p. 132) "it is considered the first reason why there are lots of difficulties ESL learners have in their writing tasks". The language difficulties affect negatively the writing proficiency of undergraduate learners as it led the students to dislike reading and writing and be unable to write different types of essays that are required from them at the university level such as persuasive, argumentative, and problem-solving essays. Those students need to be continuously encouraged to read, which consequently could affect their writing skills to be improved. The majority of Al Dafrah students do not believe that having reading in their daily routine will be reflected in the quality of their essays and how professional their writing skills will be.

It has been noticed by the researcher that some of the instructors in one of the HEIs focus on writing skills when they teach Foundation Program students, while others focus on reading skills. This led to having two groups of students. The learners in the first group were good at writing, but their reading skills were not acceptable, and their vocabulary bank was unsatisfactory. On the other hand, the reading skills and the vocabulary bank of students who were in the other group were acceptable, but they had poor writing skills. In such a situation, a question would arise: What would happen to those skills if the instructors gave an equal attention to both skills (reading and writing) by offering rich material that balances the learning of both skills? Many research studies have been conducted to investigate whether reading has an effect on improving writing proficiency and reading comprehension. Other studies have investigated how an intervention in writing would affect learner's performance in reading, how effective

would be to use reading strategies to teach Academic Writing courses, and whether the improvement of reading could help enhance students' writing proficiency. This study aims to assess classroom practices to investigate whether there is a balance in the teaching of reading and writing so as to strengthen the learners' performance in these two skills and examines whether these practices improve Foundation Programs learners' essay-writing skills in HEI.

Instructors' practices in teaching reading and writing to Foundation Program students in the context of UAE higher education has not been investigated. In addition, a few research studies have addressed how to balance reading and writing teaching methods for the purpose of improving first-year learners' performance in essay writing.

1.6 The purpose of the study and the research questions

The current study aims to investigate the effectiveness of balancing reading and writing instruction in Foundation Programs and how that could affect learners' essay writing skills in tertiary institutions in the UAE.

To achieve this goal, two research questions are formulated to drive the inquiry:

1-What are the Foundation Program instructors' perceptions and practices regarding a balance of teaching L2 reading and writing?

2-How does a balance in teaching L2 reading and writing enhance Foundation Program learners' writing performance in higher educational institution in the UAE?

1.7 Statement of problem

English is used as a medium of instruction in the majority of higher education institutions and universities in the UAE (Rowland & Murray, 2020). Accordingly, it is expected from learners who are studying in such institutions and universities acquire the four skills of English language i.e., reading, writing, listening, and speaking. However, in the remote areas of the UAE, the majority of college students face problems when reading and writing. Graham (2019) suggests that teachers should support learners to improve their reading and writing skills instead of blaming them for their poor performance.

Research studies have demonstrated that reading and writing are not just significant in the learning process: they are essential skills when it comes to improving learners' critical thinking and problem-solving proficiency (Durgun & Önder, 2019). Writing is a complex process, and a rich mode of learning, that requires cognitive analysis and linguistic synthesis. For non-native students it would be difficult to write in a foreign language, as it requires great effort and time to write skillfully (Preece & Levy, 2018). However, a number of learners in higher education may experience difficulties that are not caused by a lack of understanding, but because writing at this stage requires proficiency in different and complex activities such as determining the purpose, generating ideas, developing argument, and organizing the essay.

In the current study, it is assumed that the writing quality of Foundation Programs students would be enhanced if they were taught through reading texts as they have a model for their own writing. Teaching language skills separately has received much criticism, but we cannot consider it wrong to select a skill and work with it for a while until students understand what it is and how to do it (Graham *et al.*, 2018). However, the problem is that the teaching process of that skill stops right there. In balanced instruction, the teacher should not teach language skills out of a context as students need to move from knowing the skill to purposely using it (Linuwih, 2020).

Accordingly, teaching reading and writing skills requires effective teaching skills that need coaching and experience to be mastered. Balanced instruction is not only combining skills, but also providing rich and cohesive knowledge (Mombach *et al.*, 2019). It includes six main elements. The first one is reading where the focus is on phonics and phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, and comprehension strategies. The second element is writing which includes four steps: pre-writing, drafting, revising and editing, and publishing. The third one is integration which involves reading-writing connection, modeling, shared reading and writing, and literature and mentor texts where high-quality texts are used as examples for both reading and writing instruction. The fourth element is authentic purpose which means providing writing tasks that connect to students' interests and real-life situations, which makes the writing process meaningful and motivating. The fifth one is assessment and feedback that comprise of formative assessment and timely and constructive feedback. The last one is differentiation that incorporates individualized instruction and scaffolded support (Nation & Macalister, 2020).

Language teaching includes integrating all language skills to provide various levels of support and a blend of activities. In addition, a balanced approach to teaching reading and writing ensures that students develop strong skills in both areas, enabling them to effectively communicate, comprehend, and critically analyze texts (Pressley, Allington, & Pressley, 2023). However, it cannot be said that offering various activities makes the instruction of language skills effective or ineffective, but rather that the key is in the way in which these skills are brought together to complement one another without ignoring the needs of the learners to whom they will be taught (Cheung and Slavin, 2016).

A number of studies have investigated the issue of teaching reading and writing to improve learners' writing abilities, but the majority of these studies have addressed the issue at the school level. Few research studies have addressed how to balance reading and writing instruction in order to improve learners' performance in essay writing at the level of higher education.

1.8 Significance of the study

In the present study, the researcher tries to contribute new knowledge to the field by addressing some issues that Foundation Program learners would face in reading and writing classes, which would be as a result of instructors' practices.

First-year students often face a variety of challenges when it comes to adjusting to college life and academics, and some of these challenges can be exacerbated by certain teaching practices. A number of research studies shed light on some issues that first-year students might encounter as a result of teachers' practices. Cicha, Rizun, Rutecka, and Strzelecki (2021) pointed that lack of clarity in expectations is the major issue Foundation Program students face as some teachers don't clearly communicate their expectations regarding assignments, grading criteria, and class participation. Consequently, first-year students might struggle to understand what is required of them. This lack of clarity can lead to confusion and anxiety about meeting course requirements. Fast pacing is another problem in Foundation Program classes. Petillion and McNeil (2020) suggested that some teachers might assume that students are familiar with the college-level workload and pace, leading to lectures, assignments, and readings that are too fast for first-year students to keep up with. This can lead to feelings of being overwhelmed and

struggling to absorb the material. An *et.al.* (2021) inferred that in large lecture-style classes, there might be limited opportunities for meaningful interaction between teachers and students. First-year students might feel lost in the crowd and hesitate to ask questions or seek help. On the other hand, Means and Neisler (2021) mentioned that teachers with rigid grading policies might not take into account the challenges that first-year students face as they transition to college. This can add undue stress and pressure, affecting students' confidence and motivation. Likewise, Shim and Lee (2020) think that teachers who rely solely on monotonous lectures without incorporating interactive activities or varied teaching methods can make learning feel boring and disconnected for first-year students. Finally, Selvaraj *et.al.* (2021) indicated that some teachers might assume that students have a certain level of prior knowledge or skills, neglecting the fact that first-year students come from diverse educational backgrounds. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy and frustration.

In the current study, the researcher tries to address these issues, to help Foundation Program teachers consider adopting more student-centered approaches, clear communication strategies, interactive teaching methods, and create a supportive learning environment that acknowledges the challenges faced by first-year students. Consequently, collaboration between teachers, academic advisors, and support services can also contribute to a smoother transition and better overall experience for those students.

The significance of the current research arises from the fact that it addresses teachers' practices in teaching English language in general and reading and writing in particular in higher education Foundation Programs. The findings of this study are very important to the researcher as she is a coordinator for the English Bridging Program (EBP) and an instructor in the English Communications Program (ECP) in one of the higher education institutions.

In ECP, there were three English courses that were taught to students who those who did not meet the English language requirement of the college. These courses were LSC 0109 (level 1), LSC 0209 (level 2), and LSC 0306 (level 3). At the beginning of 2020 – 2021 academic year, the institution has decided to cancel teaching LSC 0109 and LSC 0209 courses. Instead, they created the English Bridging Program (EBP) to teach English low-level students whose EmSAT score is below 850. Those whose EmSAT score is from 850 to 875 will be enrolled in

LSC 306 which is considered as level 1. High school students who got from 900 to 1075 in EmSAT test will join LSC 0303 that is considered as level two.

The findings of the current research may offer solutions that would help Foundation Programs teachers to create an active teaching-learning environment by giving equal attention and effort in teaching reading and writing skills. In addition, the current study could aid English language teachers in diagnosing learners' weaknesses and strengths in essay writing. Finally, its results would support syllabus designers' efforts to enrich the curriculum of English Bridging Program with material that is based on integrating reading and writing instruction.

The current study is important to determine whether the changes in the methods used in teaching reading and writing are effective in helping Foundation Programs students be successful in college-level courses, as those students struggled when they were in high school.

The researcher also hopes that this study could direct the attention towards the requirements and strategies of essay writing in Foundation Programs in a way that will positively develop learners' academic achievement across their academic journey and would improve English language teaching in the UAE at higher education level.

Chapter 2: Study Context

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the context in which the current study was conducted will be presented. It clarifies the significance of English language in the UAE, the English language level of Emirati students according to benchmark tests' results, and the provision of English language in Foundation programs in tertiary institutions in the UAE.

Recently, the UAE government has associated the Ministry of Education (MOE) with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHESR) which carried out the responsibility of higher education in both public and private universities and institutions. In 2008, the Ministry of Education launched some reforms in the school system that was because the vast majority of public-school students are deficiently prepared to study in higher education institutions and universities that use English as a medium of instruction (Macaro, Curle, Pun, An, & Dearden, 2018). As a result, a large amount of funds has been expended on Foundation preparative programs.

2.2 The significance of English language in the UAE

The significance of English language in the UAE has been evident in the school curriculum (Copland, Garton, & Burns, 2014). With exception of Arabic and Emirati/Islamic studies, English is used as a medium of instruction in the majority of higher education institutions and universities. The UAE government targets to increase its people's knowledge in all science fields, which use English as a common language that will drive the future job market. The current job market urges the Emiratis, especially those who want to work in the oil industry and who want to work in the public and private sectors, to have English language courses (Dev & Qiqieh, 2016). Consequently, different language schools such as British Council, Eton Institute, and Berlitz have been established to help in raising the level of English language for those who are in need.

According to the previously mentioned situation, a big number of public and private universities that use English as a medium of instruction have been established and currently have more than 146,000 students who enrolled in more than 75 colleges (Al Hussein & Gitsaki,

2018). These higher education institutions serve foreign students and UAE local community. The vast majority of these universities offer their programs in English and some of them give support sessions through English medium (Baker, 2017).

The UAE has three main public higher educational institutions that are: United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), and Zayed University (ZU). These institutions offer their programs to national Emiratis who seek their higher education certifications in different majors such as Engineering, business, education, health science, and IT (Calafato, 2022). A few of non-Emiratis have enrolled in these universities as they got a scholarship from their home country to study in UAE public intuitions. In the public tertiary institutions, Emirati students attend their colleges free of charge because of that it is more popular than private universities. The majority of all content courses are delivered through the medium of English except Emirati/Islamic studies and Arabic, which are taught in Arabic as part of the core curriculum.

Although the UAE government has given noticeable attention to English language learning in the school system and higher education, it has been observed that the English proficiency of Emirati students is not sufficient to enroll in higher education institutions or in the current job market (Desai, 2022). In the UAE, the workforce consists of more than 150 nationalities who mainly came from the Far East, America, Canada, and Europe, while Emiratis make up 12% of the total population. Most of these people are not fluent in Arabic. Consequently, the use of the Arabic language has been vanished since English language has been used as lingua franca in the workplace in the UAE (Al Hussein & Gitsaki, 2018). According to the previously mentioned situation, youth Emiratis have to develop their English language proficiency to be able to compete in the workplace as unemployment is considered a serious concern not only across the UAE but also all over the world (Ashour, 2020).

2.3 English language standard in the UAE

The poor English language standards among the UAE citizens, the emphasis on nationalize jobs, and support the economic development have become the main concerns of the UAE government (Siemund, Al-Issa, & Leimgruber, 2021). These concerns were stated in the report of the UAE Federal National Council's Committee for Education and Youth and

Information and Cultural in 2015 (Griffin & Coelho, 2018). This report expresses the anxiety of the UAE government regarding the general degradation in the standards of English language among UAE students (Meinck, Fraillon, & Strietholt, 2022).

Consequently, the public higher education institutions have dedicated specific financial resources to create Foundation Programs in order to prepare high school graduates to have the needed English language background to cope with their academic studies at English medium institutions. These Foundation Programs were established to equip high school students in English, math, and study skills to meet the requirements to enroll in the program the desire. One-third of the budget of the three federal tertiary institutions (Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), Zayed University, and the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) is spent on the Foundation Programs (Hargis, Cavanaugh, Kamali, & Soto, 2014).

Although the English language has taken a large part of the school system curriculum since 1992, the instructors in higher education institutions have shared their experience, in which they asserted the fact that most first-year students fail to achieve a satisfactory English literacy level to be able to cope with their academic life in English-medium intuitions (Mouhanna, 2016). A large number of these instructors have affirmed that writing is the students' weakest skill (Van den Hoven & Carroll, 2021).

In 2009 and for the first time, Dubai schools participated in the Program for International Student Assessment Program (PISA), in which over 5620 students from 132 schools (government and private) have taken the PISA test (Wanphet & Tantawy, 2018). Out of sixty-five countries, Dubai ranked 42nd in the test. The average level of writing skills for all participants was one, which expresses the importance of writing skills especially for school students. According to the head of PISA exam, "One-third of the students in Dubai did not reach the baseline Level 2 in writing literacy, which is considered the minimum level required for successful knowledge-based economy" (Chell, Mikkila-Erdmann, Iiskala, & Dillon, 2021).

In 2012 and 2015, all UAE schools have participated in PISA test. In writing skills, its rank fell down from 45th to 47th, which is 49 points less than the average of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Students from both public and private schools across the UAE have taken the PISA test. Those students included Emiratis and non-

Emiratis. In 2015, the results of PISA test were disappointing to the government as it aspired a remarkable enhancement in these results due to the reforms in the educational system that started in 2008 and the funds spent on implementing these reforms (Wanphet & Tantawy, 2018).

In 2007, students in Dubai schools took the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) test for the first time. This test measures some trends in mathematics and science in school systems all over the world and the results are usually used as data for decision-makers and stakeholders. The report of TIMSS could be applicable to the questions of literacy in the UAE since it can be used to document the link between learners' achievement in math and the books' number in their houses. This test was taken by 4th and 8th graders. According to the test results, the score of students who have between 100 to 190 books at home was 485 points, while those with 25-99 books have a score of 454 points. On the other hand, the score of students who have between 10 – 24 books at home was 412 points, which indicates that the average of Dubai students who have books at home is fewer than students across the world (Wiberg, 2019).

A few years after the reforms in the educational system, the MOE declared that the intensive program that are taught to students to meet the requirements of English-medium universities would be stopped in 2018 (Ashour, 2020). The experts in education field rationalize this decision with claiming that it could enhance the standards of English language teaching in high school and reduce the costs by closing out the Foundation Programs at public tertiary institutions (Andrew, Taylorson, Langille, Grange, & Williams, 2018). In 2017, The MOE announced that the elimination of Foundation Programs in the tertiary institutions has been postponed until 2021 (Matsumoto, 2019). In accordance with the current situation in tertiary institutions, it can be concluded that major reforms in the educational system usually take time to be implemented and achieve their goals.

2.4 Teaching English in the Western region of the UAE

In the Western region of the UAE, teaching and learning English language in the school system depends on the material presented in the textbook. English teachers there are non-native speakers as it is a primitive and remote area, making it difficult for English native teachers to stay. The majority of English language teachers are from Jordan, India, the Philippines, Syria, and Egypt. This led to a big number of low-level students in the English language who do not

give any effort to learn the material as they rely on their teachers to translate it. Such practices created a situation in which students do not need to effectively interact with their teacher to discuss the meaning of a word or make an effort to connect with the textbook. No time is spent in class discussions as the teachers are required to cover the material that will be tested at the end of the semester. Although Math and Science are also taught in English, students are still passively exposed to the English material and its translation in Arabic. In such classes, students stay outside the learning process as they do not effectively involve or interconnect with the English language (Palmer, 2015).

Since students are not actively engaged in the learning process, it is hard for them to have the motivation to learn the language. They attend their classes because they want to have some suggestions about what would come in the final exam. The only motivation for those students to be in class is that their teachers can predict questions that might come in the exam and can give them the answers that they would memorize. These suggestions are important for students as they will guarantee that they will get a good grade to please their parents (Al Hussein & Gitsaki, 2018).

Because the number of students in public school classes is big (30 - 40 students), it is infrequent to develop a relationship between the teachers and their students. Most of the students have private tutors who help them memorize the answers to the predicted test questions.

In general, schoolteachers' practices in English language classes do not allow their learners to enhance their English skills to enroll in the tertiary institutions (Baker, 2017).

2.5 Benchmark tests used in tertiary institutions in the UAE

During 2000s, Higher Colleges of Technology, the largest higher education institution in the UAE, disallowed awarding the university degree to students who have not met English language requirements that were measured at that time by one external benchmark test that is International English Language Testing Service (IELTS). This test was used as an exit exam for students who have finished two years in their undergraduate programs to be conferred a diploma degree or four years in their programs to be awarded a bachelor's degree (Raven, 2011). In order to graduate with their degrees, students had to get 5.5 as an overall IELTS score. In 2007, Higher

Colleges of technology changed the IELTS band requirement to become 5.0 instead of 5.5, which has been used as one of the entry criteria for all students who want to enroll in public and private higher education institutions and universities all over the UAE. This was in accordance with 2007 guidelines that were published by the UAE Commission of College Accreditation (CAA).

In these guidelines, it has been proposed that score of 5.0 in IELTS exam equals band 500 in TOEFL test “for programs taught in English a minimum TOEFL score of 500 (173 CBT, 61 iBT), 5.0 IELTS [emphasis added], or another standardized, internationally recognized test that is approved by the Commission”. It is one of the requirements to enroll in English-medium higher education institutions (Standards for Licensure and Accreditation, 2011). Accordingly, students who have a score of 5.0 can be described as “modest users” with “a partial command of the language.” They can cope with overall meaning in most situations with some mistakes, but they are able to handle basic communication in their own specialty (Understand Your IELTS Scores, 2015).

Before establishing the CAA, the enrollment of Emirati students in their higher education programs was according to their results on the Common Educational Placement Assessment (CEPA). This standardized placement test was developed and implemented by three public higher education institutions in the UAE under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR)(Hijazi, Zoubeidi, Abdalla, Al-Waqfi, & Harb, 2008). CEPA test is a paper-based exam that assesses the achievement of Emirati students who finished grade 12 (high school) in two subjects: English and math. Later on, the math component was canceled after developing it into on-line test. After 2007, school students who were not lucky enough to get the required score in CEPA exam were given a chance to take IELTS test and obtain a score of 5.0 to be accepted in the higher education programs they desired. This led to having IELTS exam as immensely commercialized test and the rules regarding the number of times between the attempts have been canceled. At that time, Emirati students were allowed to register for more than four attempts at a time, and “luck” was considered as a key element in obtaining the score of 5.0. In 2014, the government of the UAE decided to develop a new national examination system to replace the IELTS test due to the continuous criticism from high school students and their parents (Solloway, 2018).

In 2017, CEPA and IELTS were replaced by the Emirates Standardized Test, which is used as a requirement for Emiratis to enroll in the public higher education institutions (About EmSAT, 2018). EmSAT exam is an on-line test that has been accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research to test high school students' level in three subjects: English, math, and science. At present, there is a plan to include Arabic language in the test (Michell, 2022).

2.6 The character and structure of higher education in the UAE

In the UAE, Emirati students have two main tertiary pathways. They can enroll at one of the vocational institutions or choose a public or private institution or university. Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), and Zayed University (ZU) are domestic tertiary education providers, which offer UAE nationals a free education. On the other hand, full-fee education that is offered by private universities attracts local and expatriate students as well. The number of international branch universities and institutions has increased over the last two decades (Dearden & Macaro, 2016). Admission into domestic and private tertiary institutions is on the basis of students' performance in their high school and their proficiency in the English language as English is used as a medium of instruction in the majority of these universities. In HCT, a student's performance in the EmSAT exam (The Emirates Standardized Test) ascertains his/her admission since it determines the proficiency of the student's English language, which is considered as one of the pre-requirements. Van der Walt (2013) pointed out the relationship between tertiary education and economic growth by emphasizing that:

“the region may have, or be in the process of creating, the world's most globalized higher education system, with international partnerships, faculty and qualifications, and with the English language dominating almost all new initiatives” (p. 19).

Tertiary institutions in the UAE initially reflect the UK pattern with the modern influence of the USA. A big range of educational patterns such as institution's philosophical mission, and its curriculum and pedagogy have been borrowed from these two countries and haphazardly implemented (Yıldız, Soruç, & Griffiths, 2017). For example, the mission statement of Zayed University implies the effect of the American educational model, which influences its

educational culture. Public higher education institutions have also sought international accreditation from the accreditation bodies of UK and USA (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2012). In addition, there is a common preference in the UAE three predominant higher education institutions for employing English native speaker especially in the Foundation Programs, as they are English medium institutions.

The features and structure of tertiary institutions and universities in the UAE have been shaped in 1970s as a result of four key decisions (Nuseir & El Refae, 2021). At the beginning, the decision included the foundation and operation of the UAE's governmental higher education institutions and universities to separately provide male and female Emirati students with the needed educational services. This policy urged recruiting international and well-qualified teaching staff in addition to adopting English medium instruction. Moreover, this policy eligible the education for all national residence especially females (Salloum, 2018). However, the governmental institutions have contrasted the primary and secondary schools by adopting the policy of English medium instruction. This adoption aimed to prepare national graduates who would eventually be employed in international companies, which use English language as a medium of communication.

Emirati learners are needed to demonstrate a satisfactory level of English language mastery before starting their tertiary studies. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific research (MOHESR) has presented EmSAT test that examines the level of English language proficiency. Student's result in this exam decides whether the student need to spend one year in Foundation Program to raise the level of his/her English language or not before starting his/her program study in the Federal higher education institutions (Crawford, Butler-Henderson, Rudolph, Malkawi, Glowatz, Burton, Magni, & Lam, 2020).

The formalization of the English medium instruction model has raised the recognition of the other international exams such as TOEFL and IELTS, which evaluate the academic performance of Emirati and resident students. These tests have been employed to decide who is capable of starting his/her undergraduate study in the three federal institutions. Candidates have to get an overall score of 5.0 in IELTS exam or 1100 in EmSAT test to be accepted in the program stream, otherwise they have to spend one year in Foundation Program to raise their

English proficiency. As stated by the General Director of ADEK, Mugheer Khamis Al Khaili, only 10% of national high school students are able to enroll in their program studies in the federal institutions. On the other hand, those who have not met the admission requirements need to register in Foundation Program in order to increase their English language proficiency to be able to begin their graduate degree (Yusoff, 2019).

A number of significant questions have been raised as a result of the low standard of English language skills for first-year students. To start with, how applicable and efficient implementing the English medium instruction policy in higher education institutions and what is the degree of marginalizing the use of the Arabic language. Secondly, how UAE's universities have addressed the issues interrelated to students' deficits in the English language to reduce the degree of deficiency that would affect the learning process. Finally, yet importantly, the degree of stakeholders' and decision makers' awareness regarding the negative impact of poor English proficiency on education quality if compared to international standards.

Wilkins (2010) has an unchallenged assumption when he pointed out that the curriculum of English medium universities and institutions is considered very significant. Recently, number of research studies have been conducted to investigate and assess the appropriateness and efficacy of language policies that were a result of having English as a major language that is taught in the primary, secondary, and higher education in the Gulf territory (Aljifri & Khasharmeh, 2006; Troudi, Coombe, & Al-Hamly, 2009; Belhiah & Elhami, 2015).

The research studies that recently investigated the issue of language policy have concluded that there is not a governmental recognition regarding the impact of language policy on students' academic progress (Alghawi, Ameen, & Bhaumik, 2019; Al-Bataineh, 2021; Barnawi, 2022). The UAE Ministry of Education and Youth evidenced this situation when it released the Vision 2020 document, in which the main skills of higher education graduates have been outlined. It has been stated that undergraduates should have high-quality education that enables them to have sufficient literacy skills, adequate communication skills, and effective skills of professional employability (Clarke & Otaky, 2006). This document addresses the required changes in different areas that could impact the standards of teaching and learning process, curriculum, and assessment instruments. However, the issue of language policy has not

been referenced despite its major effect on students' academic progress (Hatahet, Al-Obaidi, Tekko, & Chen, 2022).

2.7 Study's institutional context

In 1985, Chancellor of the United Arab Emirates University, H.E. Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan, promised the UAE nationals to find a unique undergraduate education system that stresses the models of productivity, the ideals of self-determination, and aspirations of excellence. His Excellency made a commitment to create the highest quality of higher education system that could be employed to raise Emirati nationals' education in both technical and professional careers needed in a rapid developed society. In 1988, the Late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may his soul rest in peace, issued Federal Law no. 2 to establish the largest higher educational institution in the UAE in fulfillment of the vision of H.E. Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan. That year, only four colleges were built and then, a Center of Excellence for Applied Research and Training (CERT) in addition to other twelve colleges have been established all over the Emirates to shape the network, strategies, and policies of that institution (Higher Colleges of Technology official website, 4 August 2022).

The college where the current study is conducted caters to approximately 23000 students from both genders and employs approximately 2000 academic and administrative staff. It has six academic departments beside the department of English language that belongs to General Academic Requirements Division: Applied Media, Business, Computer Information Science, Engineering Technology & Science, Education, and Health Sciences. The credit hour system is followed in this institution, which enables its graduates to have either a Higher Diploma or bachelor's degree.

Instructors and lecturers who teach in program stream are from different countries such as America, England, Europe, Africa, Middle East, Far East, and New Zealand in addition to some Emiratis who mostly work as administrators. Holding a Master or a Ph.D. degree in a specific major in addition to two-year experience is a requirement to join the college as a faculty member. Instructors and lecturers are expected to teach from 20 to 24 hours a week. Furthermore, teachers have from two to four office hours a week during which they can meet students who need support. Although teachers' English proficiency is not formally evaluated,

having a satisfactory command of English is compulsory since it is mentioned in the employment documents. On the other hand, program teachers are not trained to deal with learners' language deficiency, but their program leaders observe them to check how they deal with the linguistic issues during their classes.

The vast majority of the college students are national Emiratis with few learners come from other countries such as Eritrea. Accordingly, almost all students have the same background with regard to their mother tongue, religion, education, and culture. As the college is an English medium institution, this required its students to have a good command of English proficiency when they enroll in the program stream. The Foundation Program has been created to support students with poor English proficiency to enhance their English language level by enrolling in non-credit courses to improve their communication skills that include reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The program curriculum involves in-house and imported material and all assessments are computerized and held on-campus.

2.8 Admission to the college

The registration of students at the college depends on their own choice. To enroll at the college, students have to pass their high school level with the minimal mark as decided by the Ministry of Education in the UAE. At the same time, meeting the English language requirement of the college is a pre-requisite for the admission in the desired program study. This can be measured by EmSAT test that should not be less than 1100 or having a band score of 5.0 in IELTS to join the specialized program. If students have not met this requirement, they have to join the Foundation Program for one year. This program helps those students improve their English language skills that include reading, writing speaking, and listening in addition to grammar and vocabulary.

2.9 Foundation Program

Big number of high school students struggle to meet the English language requirement that is a pre-requisite to enroll at the college. This could lead students to have a kind of frustration who would be forced to postpone their program studies (Gardiner-Hyland, 2014). As a member of Foundation Program and General Studies faculty, the researcher has witnessed the

struggle of a big number of students who have joined their program studies with poor English proficiency.

Consequently, Foundation Program has been established to support students who have not met the English language requirements of the college. It consists of two levels: one for those who got from 900 to 1075 in EmSAT test (Level 2) and another one for those who got less than 875 (Level 1). Students whose their score is between 900- 1075 have 10 contact hours per week, while students whose their score is less than 875 have 15 contact hour a week of intensive English classes. Level one students have to pass their level to be able to take level 2. Those students have to complete and pass these courses within one year; otherwise, they would be dismissed from the college.

However, the efficacy of Foundation Program has been questioned as some research studies have evaluated it and found that it does not produce the desired results in improving EFL students' linguistic proficiency (Dev & Qiqieh, 2016; Zakarneh, Al-Ramahi, & Mahmoud, 2020). Deveci and Wyatt (2022, p. 146) have criticized the Foundation Program that is implemented in Middle East universities by stating that:

“Over the years, some professionals offering the remedial courses have claimed that the effectiveness of the courses in improving the skills of students in the foreign language is greatly challenged. Some believe that the remedial courses are just a waste of time for the students because they fail to portray any significant improvement in their test performance. This sentiment is supported by the claims of many students who feel like the remedial courses are a model of punishment. Their general attitude towards the courses is negative.”

Another study by Rogier (2012) suggests that there has been a general criticism of Foundation Program in addition to periodic reports from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, in which the government announced the intention of abolishing the program by 2019. Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan (the former minister of education) has confirmed this decision.

“For too long students have had to suffer through a limbo year when they were neither school pupils nor studying towards their degrees and universities have had to bear the cost” (Rogier, 2012, p. 43).

At the same time, the focus on Foundation Program problems does not mean we do not have other underlying issues such as English curriculum in the primary and secondary school sectors, the quality of the material that is taught to first year students, and EFL material that is taught at the pre-tertiary level. Such situations lead to conclude that there is a lot of pressure on Foundation Program instructors as it is required from them to help their students improve their English proficiency in one semester, which is a short period of time (Wanphet & Tantawy, 2018).

2.10 Language support at the college

ADEC (Abu Dhabi Educational Council) has launched an initiative in which the level of English language proficiency of high school students will be increased. This is expected to happen in the coming few years as there is a plan to skip the Foundation Program from higher education institutions and universities and have high school students to start their undergraduate studies immediately (Yagoub, Mohamed, Al Hosani, & Elshareif, 2022). Consequently, the college is reviewing the Foundation program’s outcomes and challenges that students face to direct the attention to Student Support Center to help those students improve their English language proficiency. This decision contrasts the Foundation Program’s objective that asserts the idea of preparing high school students to meet the English language requirement of the college.

In addition to English Foundation Program, there are a number of courses that General Studies division offer to help undergraduate and first year students improve their academic reading and writing skills as well as their public speaking and communication skills. Although these courses have different names, they tend to be very general with a slight difference in the focus that is dependent on the course content and material. At the end of each course, students are required to work on a project that is relevant to their specialized study and present it in front of their colleagues, which helps them enhance their speaking and communication skills in addition to increasing their self-esteem and confidence. However, it has been argued that having

these courses for two semester is not sufficient to improve students' weak English language proficiency. Moreover, these courses do not help undergraduate students meet the language requirements that they need for their specialized courses (Schoepp, 2018; Masri, 2019; Munday, 2021).

In addition to General Studies courses, college students have access to the Academic Support Program (ASP), which helps college students get tutorial sessions that meet their needs during their academic journey in both Arabic and English language. Although the services of this program have attracted undergraduate students, however, it is not able to meet the students' needs in terms of improving their language proficiency. Furthermore, Foundation Program students are having less support to develop their language skills during their specialized study once they pass the program.

In addition to dealing with challenges of studying in an English medium institution, students have to cope with the variety of the learning style that is founded on self-learning and student-centered approach (Jackson, 2015). Such challenges do not affect undergraduate students only, but also, they influence their teachers who are supposed to address these problems while delivering the content of their courses and try to find a solution. Although those teachers were promoted to teach specialized courses, they found themselves dealing with some students who are unable to cope with the course tasks and assignments. Consequently, as those instructors do not have the pedagogical background needed to help their students, they will be considered as unprepared because of this challenge.

Although teachers have various PD sessions during the academic year, the focus of these sessions is only on how to employ technology in the class, the design of the course and curriculum, and course evaluation. Such courses are useful for teachers who lack information about how to employ technology in their classrooms or those who do not take pedagogical courses. However, decision makers have not paid attention to the need for supporting teachers to address the ongoing issues associated with language and literacy when they deliver their content courses despite of its significance in the teaching and learning process.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the settings of the context of the current study starting with the importance of English language in the UAE, English language standards in the UAE, benchmark tests used in tertiary institutions in the UAE. It also clarified the character and structure of higher education in the UAE. Finally, it provides some information about admission to the college, Foundation Program, and language support at the college.

Incorporating a balanced approach in Foundations Programs acknowledges the diversity of students' backgrounds, learning styles, and needs, creating a supportive environment that sets them up for success in their academic journeys.

This chapter illustrates the importance of English language among the community of the UAE, primary and secondary school sector, and tertiary education. The next chapter presents the conceptual framework of the study, the research theoretical framework, and the review of literature that is related to the topic of the current study.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

In this chapter, relevant literature was reviewed to provide background information that relates to the research questions. With this intention, Nunan (1992) says that the systematic literature review acquaints the reader with previous research studies in the field to shed light on the gaps and pitfalls in the target area.

This chapter consists of four sections: a conceptual framework, a theoretical framework, literature related to the current study, and a summary. The first section focuses on reading, writing, essays, and teaching methods. In the theoretical framework, three theories were discussed: Schema Theory, Social Cognitive Theory and Self-efficacy in Writing, and Emergent Literacy Theory. The third section sheds lights on the insights of other researchers about literacy development in higher education, the interrelation between reading and writing instruction, effective essay writing, the influence of reading on writing skills and a balance in reading and writing instruction.

3.1 Conceptual framework

3.1.1 The concept of L2 reading skills

Kim (2017) defines reading as an interactive process in which the reader creates meaning from printed words. This creation can be considered as a practice in both reading and writing. The meaning can be delivered if the reader reads to understand various sections in the passage, deals with different texts on the same topic, and judges what he/she reads.

Zainal, Husin, and Pendidikan (2011) state that reading is a combination of various skills in which the reader interacts with printed material to gain knowledge and for pleasure. A number of sub-skills can be taught through reading such as writing, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and speaking. According to Leu *et al.* (2017), the reader should master several reading skills to be considered as a skillful reader. For instance, the purpose of reading should be identified, and the reader has to know how to interpret the printed words with the purpose in her/his mind and align her/his understanding of the text with the purpose of reading.

Hastuti (2020, p.34) states that “reading is considered as a foundation of writing skill as the information developed by reading includes encoded indications about how the message semantic, grammatical, pragmatic, lexical, and rhetorical constitute, associates to form meaningful messages”. Accordingly, it can be said that writing would be supported through meaningful reading input.

3.1.1.1 Reading habit of first-year students

Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2014) have defined reading habits as an effective manner of thinking developed through continuous and unconscious activities of mental practices that include building meaning from printed texts. It is the behavior in which an individual expresses his/her own reading will, likeness, and tastes. Reading habits also have been defined by Rosli, Razali, Zamil, Noor, and Baharuddin (2017) as a continuous process of learning in which readers arrange their understanding to learn letters, words, sentences, and complete passages. Research has shown that first year students should be encouraged to have reading as a habit. Scientists assert that reading should accompany learners throughout their life, as it is important for their personal growth, frames their creativity, and allows them to control language (Fatiloro, Adesola, Hameed, & Adewumi, 2017). In practice, it has been discovered that gender, age, educational background, academic performance and professional growth are associated with reading habits (Mokhtari, Reichard, & Gardner, 2009). Reading helps first year learners to be good readers, qualified writers, sufficiently competent in vocabulary and grammar, and equipped with a decent writing style as well. It has been noted that reading habits associate students with their learning progress and influence their academic life (Huang, Capps, Blacklock, & Garza, 2014).

3.1.1.2 Elements affect reading habits

As reviewed by a number of research studies, it has been found that reading habits would effectively help learners improve their writing style, increase their vocabulary bank, enhance their grammar competency, have good spelling (Gallik, 1999, Mokhtari, Reichard, & Gardner, 2009). According to Lone (2012), females are more likely to be heavy readers than males. Erdem (2015) has stated some elements affect first year learners’ reading habits:

- 1- Fellow effect: a study by Soomro and Khowaja (2018) has suggested that the first reason for reading books is fellow effect as individuals intend to have the same habits their close friends have.
- 2- Learners' interest: research found that students' interest is important to acquire reading habits (Mlay & Sabi, 2019). Ahmad, Dar, and Lone (2019) claim that learners' personal interest is the most effective element motivating learners' reading habits. In their study, they concluded that learners' interests are strongly connected with their age, academic performance, gender, and professional growth.
- 3- Reading resources available in the library: If the resources in the library are appropriate to learners' reading inclination, their reading habits will increase (Diwan, 2020). Students aged between 17 to 21 were surveyed to investigate the diversity of reading sources available in the library. It has been found that Denmark learners read about 148 fiction and non-fiction stories, while adventure and mystery stories were the most popular among Singaporean students. In Australia, science fiction was at the top followed by action adventure and fantasy. On the other hand, British students like to read fantasy fiction, thriller books, humor, and horror (Vandenhoeck, 2013).

3.1.2 The concept of L2 academic writing skills

The fact that makes writing different from other language skills is that it is not a naturally acquired skill (Kim, 2014). As an illustration, other language skills such as speaking and listening can be acquired without receiving professional training. This is different from writing skills which need much practice in order to be improved. Because writing is considered one of the commonest ways to assess learners' performance in English language, it is used in all examinations that measure students' English language proficiency (e.g., IELTS and TOEFL).

Al-Mansour and Al Shorman (2014, p.248) point out that "learning to write in English as a foreign language has been an essential professional educational issue that serves various educational purposes and meets certain learning needs upon which the foreign language learners' progress depends." In other words, mastering the writing skill relies on learners' rich vocabulary knowledge, use of words, grammar knowledge, strategies (e.g., planning) usage, mastery of

capitalization and punctuation marks, and reflection. To elaborate, successful essay writing requires cultivated and relevant ideas, supporting examples, and sufficient details.

Producing a good-quality essay is a major challenge for foreign language learners in general and undergraduate students in particular, who are loaded with time-consuming essay tasks to be written for academic purposes. This is attributed to the fact that writing is a branch of a long-term learning process compared with other language skills such as speaking and listening (Linuwih & Winardi, 2020).

3.1.3 Academic writing ability

Writing is considered the most complex and difficult communication skill. Accordingly, writing ability can be defined as a skill that enables the writer expresses his/her ideas using words and meaningfully arrange them to interact with the message (Raoofi, Binandeh, & Rahmani, 2017). Abdel Latif (2015) assumes that reading ability enables the writer to put what he/she wants to say in the form of words to express his/her feelings, thoughts, and ideas using composition, grammar, and punctuation tools.

3.1.4 Definition of essay

An essay can be defined as an extended piece of writing in which the authors present their assumptions (Toba & Noor, 2019). A number of elements must be present in the components of an essay: coherence and cohesion, unity, and logical development of ideas. Essay writing depends on communicating valid facts, giving an organized and logical argument, and reflection. There are different types of essays: descriptive where students paint a vivid picture of a person, place, object, or event using sensory details to help the reader visualize and connect with the subject; argumentative in which learners present arguments and evidence to support a particular stance on an issue using logical reasoning, research, and addressing opposing viewpoints; analytical that includes thorough analysis and interpretation of a literary work, piece of art, or other complex subject which breaks down the subject into its components, examines its structure, and explores its underlying meanings; and persuasive in which learners seek to convince the reader to adopt their viewpoint or take a specific action by presenting arguments, counterarguments, and evidence to support their position (Russell, 2020).

To become good writers, it is important for students to be aware of having a large vocabulary bank that would be done by extensive reading. Learners' writing skills can be enhanced by utilizing the language learned in the readings in a real context (Tuan, 2010).

3.1.4.1 Essay writing's characteristics

Lam (2013) has stated four characteristics of essay writing that are:

- a. Sentence structure: the skill where learners construct a paragraph using their skills to determine the suitable vocabulary for the topic (Mehrabi, 2014).
- b. Unity: is the ability to produce sentences that support and link the aspects expressed in the paragraph's main idea (Sasaki, 2011).
- c. Coherence: it is the most essential element in essay writing in which the linked paragraphs support the related ideas connected to the topic sentences (Daulay & Asrul, 2021).
- d. Support: The supporting details should equip the main idea in each paragraph.

3.1.5 Teaching methods

Teaching methods are the techniques and strategies that are utilized by the teachers to enable students' learning (Scrivani, 2017). It has different shapes such as lecture-based approach where the instructor delivers information to students through spoken communication. This method is useful for conveying large amounts of information in a structured manner. Discussions is another teaching method which involves students actively participating in conversations, sharing their thoughts, analyzing ideas, and engaging in critical thinking. It encourages student engagement and deeper understanding of the topic (Turgunova & Abdurahimovna, 2023). Eli (2021) suggests that group work and collaboration is an effective teaching method as it includes students working in small groups to solve problems, complete projects, or engage in discussions. It promotes teamwork, communication skills, and peer learning. Malikovna, Mirsharapovna, Shadjalilovna, and Kakhramonovich (2022) claim that problem-based learning and project-based learning present students with real-world problems and challenges that require critical thinking, research, and problem-solving skills. It helps

students work collaboratively to find solutions. For Ataboyev and Tursunovich (2023), flipped classrooms encourage students to review instructional materials (such as videos or readings) outside of class, allowing class time to be dedicated to discussions, group work, and interactive activities. Likewise, Sun, Anbarasan, and Praveen Kumar (2021) pointed out that case-based learning presents students with specific cases or scenarios that require analysis, decision-making, and application of knowledge. Last but not least, Turgunova and Abdurahimovna (2023) suggested that role-playing and simulations create scenarios in which students take on specific roles or personas to explore different perspectives, practice skills, and enhance understanding.

Different factors control these strategies: the goals and objectives of the lesson or course influence the choice of teaching method. (Suskie, 2018); the nature of the subject being taught can influence the choice of teaching method (Guilbert, Alamargot, & Morin, 2019); the physical layout of the classroom, availability of technology, and resources can impact the feasibility of certain teaching methods (Saydaliyeva, Atamirzayeva, & Dadaboyeva, 2020); consideration of students' learning styles, abilities, interests, and prior knowledge helps tailor teaching methods to better engage and support them. In addition to that the amount of time available for instruction affects the selection of teaching methods. (Salaxiddinovna, 2021); finally, Samadov (2022) claims that cultural norms, values, and societal expectations can impact the appropriateness of certain teaching methods in different contexts.

3.2 Theoretical framework

Hearn (1993) believes that theories explain the concepts and terms applied in the research. In order to focus on the scope of the current study, three theories were presented and discussed to elaborate on the concepts and terms used.

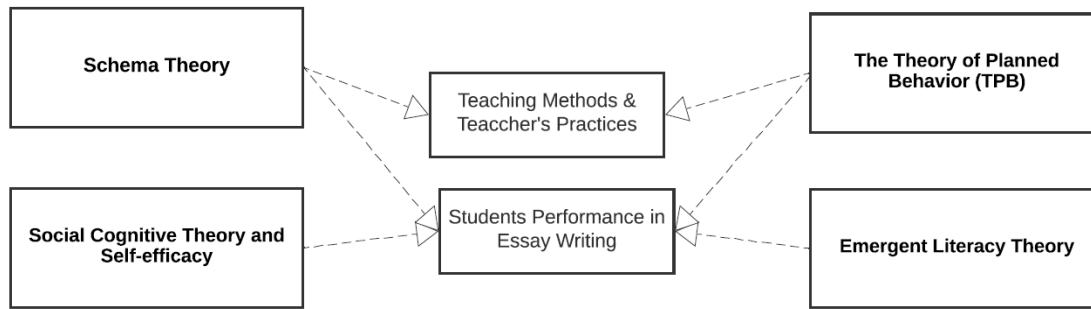


Figure 1: A simplified schematic representation of the Theoretical framework and its connection with the research questions

3.2.1 Schema Theory

Schema theory has a main effect on reading teaching methods. This theory illustrates how students' previous knowledge interacts with printed texts and describes how the background knowledge of the students and their earliest experience is fundamental to decoding the reading material. Learners' ability to employ these schemata is essential to comprehend the printed texts.

Schema theory is built on the concept that previous experience leads to creation of a mental framework that helps the reader benefit from new experience. According to Smith (1994, p.14), a schema is "comprehensive illustration of a considerable number of designs or uniformities that appear in our experience". As an illustration, the schema of airplane allows the learners to think of the airplane they previously flown in, which means that students' previous experience is connected with their new one that consists of knowing how to retrieve, organize and clarify new information (Kucer, 1987).

In the light of previously mentioned thoughts, the teachers' role is to activate and build schemata in order to teach reading skills effectively. For this goal, teachers should select reading material that suits learners' individual differences, needs, and culture in order to enable them to understand the purpose of reading, activate their existing knowledge, and help them construct new knowledge (Wallace, 1992).

However, it can be argued that old knowledge that exists in student's memory is already merged in their brain, but when new information that does not fit their schema occurs, the simple

reaction for such situation is to ignore it and as a result it would be quickly forgotten (Harmer, 2008).

3.2.2 Social Cognitive Theory and Self-efficacy

Meaning making and self-understanding are two requirements for writing activities. Writing activities enable the learners to understand their own thoughts and beliefs about an issue (Omaggio, 1993). Bandura (2001) defines self-efficacy as a core part of social cognitive theory as learners' beliefs that enable them to successfully accomplish the task even if they faced obstacles. According to Bandura, self-efficacy could predict learners' achievement better than their previous accomplishments, which is a fundamental idea for teachers because it supports their influence on learners' attitudes.

Pajares (2003) claims that four sources formulate students' self-efficacy: interpretation of learners' previous results, their role-models, their social beliefs, and their emotional status. This means that students' perception about their capabilities depends on their performance in previous tasks, the support they get, and their emotions, which would lead them to choose the task that they have high efficacy in and neglect the one where they have low self-efficacy (Pajares & Valiante, 2006). Therefore, these beliefs can be changed by providing more support and additional practice, and by the time, the new views will be substituted with the previously held ones.

After developing social cognitive theory and self-efficacy for writing, researchers have discovered that learners' attitudes about the process of their own writing and their capability for writing are essential to be successful writers (Teberosky, Sepúlveda, & Sousa, 2020). This theory is considered as a link between learners' writing self-efficacy, effective instruction for writing skills, and students' achievement in writing. It is important to develop learners' writing skills as this assist in creating an effective writing model and writing teaching methods to help the learners become efficacious writers.

3.2.3 Emergent Literacy Theory

This theory focuses on the notion that students informally acquire the aspects of literacy (e.g., behaviors, skills, ideas, knowledge, and attitudes) before they start formally learning them

in class that is the normal place to acquire these reading and writing skills. Mkandawire (2018) claims that emergent reader establishes the aspects of literacy in an earlier stage to reading and writing skills convention. Jouhar and Rupley (2020) suggest that the language skills (e.g., reading, writing, listening, and speaking) that learners acquire at home are interconnected and they are enhanced by the students' home environment. A rich home environment that consists of the components of literacy contains books, printed material, platforms to give learners opportunities to scribble.

Emergent theory supporters think that the development of literacy starts from birth to the stage in which the learners are able to read and write. This theory is important in the current study as it helps understand different literacy behaviors related to learners such as the patterns of literacy taken to school, the taught material, the design of the activities, and instruction strategies.

3.2.4 The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

Ajzen (2005) claims that Theory of Planned Behavior was established to clarify people's behaviors and to construct the production of behavioral interventions. This theory is an extension for Theory of Reasoned Action that is created partially from Expectancy-Value Theory (Lilford, Stirling, & Maillard, 2006). Researchers in the education field use TPB to lead their empirical investigations through various school subjects (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017; Cook, 2009).

The concept of motivation is central to TPB that is used to capture the intentional factors that affect individuals' behaviors (Ajzen, 1991). According to this theory, an individual's motivation is affected by three factors: behavioral attitudes towards the behavior, normative beliefs and subjective norms, and control beliefs and perceptions of control. The relationship between these factors is clarified in the following diagram.

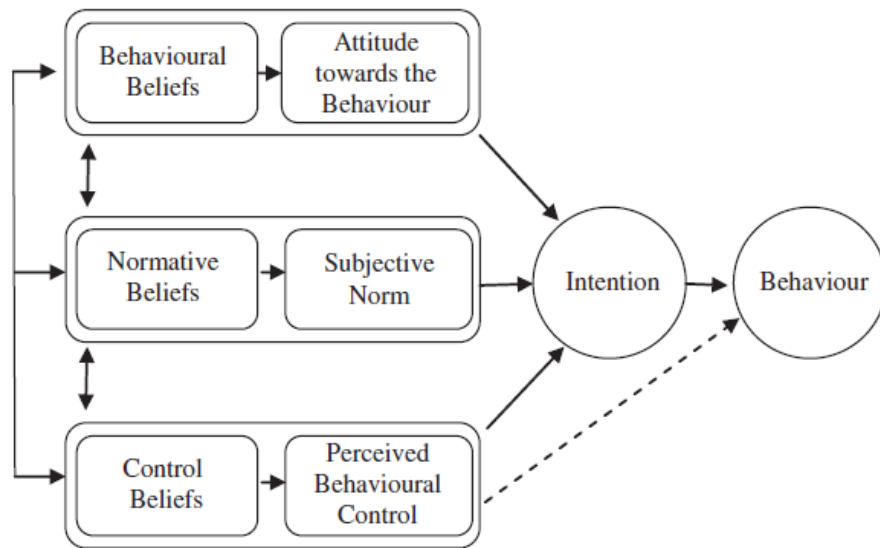


Figure 2: A simplified schematic representation of the Theory of Planned Behavior (adapted from Ajzen, 2005, p. 126).

The concept “attitude” would be defined as “the particular possibility that the individual has the attribution in inquiry” (Ajzen, 2005, p. 30). Ajzen (2005) suggests that individuals create attitudes about an issue by connecting it with specific criteria. In education, Ajzen definition is compatible with Pajares (1992, p. 316), who defined belief as “person’s opinion of a proposition’s truth or falsity”.

The nature of behavioral belief that is the first kind of attitude in the TPB is subjective and is shaped by combining behavior performance with specific outcomes. The person’s evaluation of those outcomes determines the attitude towards the behavior. Gerrig and Zimbardo (2002, p. G-2) have defined attitudes as “the acquired tendency to react to individuals, ideas, and occasions in an analytic manner”. Ajzen (2002) claims that evaluations consist of two elements: experiential (e.g., pleasant, enjoyable, and fun) or instrumental (e.g., useful, worthless, and valuable). In TPB, the utility value is the individual’s judgement of the instrumental evaluation of a behavior.

Normative belief that is the second kind of belief shoes a social effect and emerges from individual’s insights that controlling other people to approve or disapprove the adoption of a

behavior. Personal standards describe the individual's motivation to accept the subjective insights of social pressure.

Control belief is the third type of belief. It refers to factors' presence or absence that could smooth or constrain the behavior adoption. Behavioral control clarifies the level in which an individual feels him/herself to control the necessary skills to embrace the behavior. In addition, behavioral control considers the effect of previous experience/knowledge, professional development, resource barriers, and task complexity. Ajzen (1991) suggests that behavioral control can be defined as the degree of individual's ability to perform a behavior.

However, the concept of behavioral control is placed in a "common structure of the interactions such as intentions, beliefs, behavior, and attitudes" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 184) (in some circumstances, behavioral control would be employed to predict behavior especially when it shows existent control. The broken arrow in Fig. 1 indicates this relation).

This theory is important in the current study as the motivation of the instructors to adopt a knowledgeable approach to reading and writing instruction will be compatible with the relation between the three beliefs and their characteristics. Additionally, the behavioral, normative, and control beliefs modals match the context-related factors that are in higher educational institutions in the UAE.

3.3 Literature review

3.3.1 Practical challenges in Foundation Programs

For decades, confidence in implementing the communicative approach in the Foundation Programs in different countries seems unlimited. Since its establishment in the program in a form of a course for first-year students, it was clear that there is a need for competent teachers who can professionally deliver the English language material. For this purpose, a number of policies were created for teaching English in school system and in tertiary institutions such as using English as a medium of instruction in higher educational institutions especially in the Gulf area. Various research studies have been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of implementing communicative approach in Foundation Program (Al Asmari, 2015; Akbari, 2015; Al-Kindi & AL-Mekhlafi, 2017). The findings of these studies have indicated that it is

easy to formulate and change a policy of a course, but the practical challenges that they involve are very problematic.

Chang and Goswami (2011) have stated some challenges teachers face in their classes in Taiwan, but their suggestions also mirror the situations in other countries. In their study, they found that teachers were expected to acquire new teaching skills that should be used in English classes, change their evaluation methods, improve the material delivered to students, and employ technology to deliver the material. To implement the previously mentioned requirements, teachers needed to change the attitudes and approaches they use in their classes. There was a need to change the teachers' beliefs of their own role from knowledge transmitters to multi-role instructors. It was also necessary to understand that language learning is based on developing students' competencies not on knowledge acquisition especially in tertiary education.

A number of issues were reported in different studies that were related to the element of communicative activities and tasks where students were required to exchange information with each other or with their teacher (Alasmari & Ahmed, 2013; Zhao, Pandian, & Singh, 2016; Thuan, 2018). These problems included class management- in particular large classrooms and having an ungovernable demand on language skills of struggling students who have limited experience in English communication. This could lead to communicating in students' mother tongue or having minimal use of English, which would not help extend their English language competencies. In addition to what previously mentioned, teachers needed to develop new organization skills particularly when students have pair or group work, students' progress during the communicative tasks contradicts the traditional learning conceptions that involve stage-by-stage progression within a syllabus and supporting the traditional view of a teacher as knowledge transmitter instead of facilitator who help students to become independent learners.

These challenges were classified by Fareh (2010) into three categories: concepts restrictions that include local culture and values, students' English language level restrictions which involve material used and classroom practices, and institution restrictions that include curriculum assessment system.

Understanding the role of English language teaching and assessment in the classroom is another challenge Foundation Program instructors face. Those instructors recognize the importance of the textbooks and the supporting material they create for students to improve their language proficiency which has been determined by international examinations such as IELTS and TOEFL. The improvement in students' English language competencies is attributed to the quality of the material taught in class that helps students attain recognized English proficiency. To ensure the accuracy of learner proficiency statements, the examination boards, especially in tertiary education continuously rely on international exams same as IELTS and TOEFL. Norcini, Anderson, Bollela, Burch, Costa, Duvivier, Galbraith, Hays, Kent, Perrott, and Roberts (2011, p. 6) describe adopting such an approach by stating that

“The 2012 Cambridge approach to language examinations, where the language construct to be measured in the test is seen as an evidence-based product of the interaction between a targeted cognitive ability based on an expert user model, a highly specified context of use and a performance level based on explicit and appropriate criteria of description”.

In this approach, other assessment criteria firmly depend on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). A research study was conducted by Fleckenstein, Leucht, and Köller (2018) criticized this approach and suggested that the levels of CEFR are too broad, and it does not provide a narrow proficiency assessment required for the learning platforms such as Blackboard Learn. Such a platform allows the teacher to build and manage his/her courses, add the needed supporting material, and share the supplementary resources with students beyond the class walls. A big number of Foundation program instructors depend on traditional textbooks that contain interactive formats to embed them within the course material.

A number of studies investigated how technology would affect assessments (Piccoli, Ahmad, & Ives, 2001; Shih, 2011; Woldeab & Brothen, 2019). The main argument of these studies was how to use formative approaches instead of summative assessments and why the practice has not been as successful as predicted. Shih (2011, p. 65) summarizes this argument by pointing that *“There is compelling evidence from meta-analyses of hundreds of studies to indicate that formative assessment, when used to provide feedback on a daily basis to both teacher and students, is one of the most powerful interventions ever recorded in educational*

research literature. But it is rarely practiced. The time and effort involved in making, recording and analyzing daily observations of student learning defeats most teachers”.

Irvin (2007) indicated that technology has a big influence on how people learn, teach, and assess. Such a situation urged a change in language teaching and how it is supposed to be assessed, especially in higher education.

Alruwais, Wills, and Wald (2018) have suggested a number of factors that could affect language teaching. They started with giving accurate feedback which allows the teacher to do a quick analysis that can be useful to have guidance on the types of students’ errors to suggest some strategies that can help students correct the most popular mistakes they make. Then, they urged the point that teachers have to effectively adapt their teaching methods according to students’ needs. Finally, they also affirmed the point that learners have to take action after receiving teachers’ feedback especially when this action is suggested with clear instructions.

Routman (2014) has investigated how to accelerate and deepen students’ learning in language classes. He found that the use of e-textbooks and interactive presentations that focus on enhancing students’ independent learning and are firmly connected with the course outcomes and curriculum has a vital effect on students’ learning especially if it is designed to match their different learning styles. The improvement of course resources take on a real constructivist method, when the process of the development is tied to referring to the best from wherever and everywhere (Amineh & Asl, 2015).

3.3.2 Evaluating the learning of students in Foundation Programs

In the context of tertiary institutions, assessments have various definitions and meanings. Some researchers such as Heywood (2000) and Hernández (2012) defined it as a tool to encompass the evaluation process of the institution's effectiveness of which the program assessment is considered a part. Some extensive studies have interchangeably used the term assessment with the term evaluation. For Middaugh (2011), it means various evaluations that include teacher and classroom-level evaluations.

Some research studies have defined assessment depending on students’ performance and the course learning outcomes. Yarime and Tanaka (2012, p. 24) stated that “the making of judgments about how student work meets appropriate standards”. Likewise, Bryan and Clegg (2019) have margined assessment to its learning outcomes in a program of study when they

described it as the process in which learners' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs are documented in measurable tools. In their study, they refer to various tasks through which the teachers collect data about their learners' performance and achievement. Those studies have concluded that the evaluation of the course learning outcomes would have various indications for different people that could be according to its purpose and context. In tertiary institutions, assessments have been divided into two types, formative and summative. The main aim of formative assessments is to improve students' learning to be aligned with accountability and quality standards, while summative assessments have certification function (Alruwais, Wills, & Wald, 2018).

In Foundation Program, assessments significantly influence students learning. Wiliam, Lee, Harrison, and Black (2004) have emphasized the assessment influence by suggesting that it is significant to change the assessment methods in order to changing students' learning. This assertion has been supported by Dilova (2021) when he stated that assessments and all that students' gain from them are one of the most powerful influences they experience. In higher education, it structures and affects student's learning deeply as it provides clear evidence for what institutions prioritize in order to focus on more than one course outline (Dilova, 2021). Consequently, it has been suggested that changing the teaching approaches is not enough to improve students' learning, but there is a need to develop assessment methods of a course as students place a great value on them.

A number of researchers have agreed on the point that formative assessments that are usually used to assess students' learning are integral to teachers' classroom practices because it plays a fundamental role in students' learning (Dunn & Mulvenon, 2009; Gikandi, Morrow, & Davis, 2011). In contrast to summative assessments, formative assessments comprise of a group of purposive class activities in which feedback is used by both teachers and students to inform students' learning progress and improved areas. It has been noted by Wiliam (2010) that formative assessments are essential to support the development and the learning of students. In spite of that, the use of formative assessments has changed the general purpose of assessments and created new approaches in teachers' classroom practices and curriculum design policies.

The shift in the concept of assessment has been experienced at various times and to different levels in a number of countries such as the USA, Britain, and Australia. In the USA, it has been affirmed by Sadler (1998) that the assessment shift started in 1984. This movement

had been supported by combining several elements such as the reports of curriculum amendments that demanded an essential change in the curriculum, employing effective pedagogies that were connected with the raise in the learning gains, and recognize and understand students' needs and experience (Ganyaupfu, 2013). Likewise, in the 1980's, a shift towards quality emerged in UK. This has been investigated by Bunce, Baird, and Jones (2017) who reported that the system of universities has to clarify assessment objectives and enhance the indicators of student's performance. In the 1990's, another shift towards systematic quality assurance and responsibility as reported by Eze and Inegbedion (2015). The Agency of Quality Assurance (AQA) has been created according to oversee standards in higher education to signal the development of quality approach rather than supervision (Crawford & Wang, 2016).

According to previously mentioned studies, it can be concluded that assessment practices have been transformed by two purposes that are: recognizing quality of assessments and its importance in student learning experience and understanding that assessments play an essential role in teaching and learning process (Ansari & Stock, 2010). Nowadays, assessments have two functions- assessments for learning (formative) and assessments for certified learning (summative). These two types have been reflected in the current assessment policy in Foundation Program.

3.3.3 Balanced reading and writing assessments

Wandasari, Kristiawan, and Arafat (2019) stated that the use of balanced reading and writing assessments in Foundation Program has been increased. Balanced reading and writing assessments include questions that ask learners to produce essays depending on a given set of reading passages. Such assessments emphasize the interrelation skills of reading and writing that could reflect students' actual use of English language skills in academic setting (Rieh, Bradley, Genova, Le Roy, Maxwell, Oehrli, & Sartorius, 2022).

The fairness of teachers' scoring decisions has to be based on students' performance ratings which is important to be associated with the assessment within the literacy testing context. Zhang (2022) has investigated the perceptions of the raters regarding textual borrowing in balanced reading and writing assessments. He concluded that teachers place different significance on formal agreements, and they have various attitudes regarding paraphrasing texts.

The markers who evaluate balanced reading and writing assessments have some challenges as they have to grade both students' written essays and their reading skills to be able to combine the information provided by learners' work.

Paul and Elder (2019) define grading accuracy as comparing the grades with the standard scores of learners' performance. They recommended three procedures to develop teachers' scoring decisions: (1) taking average score among all grades, (2) taking the average marks of previous grades tasks and use it as anchor file, and finally (3) using the grades that are obtained from expert markers. From previously mentioned study it can be inferred that the tasks of balanced reading and writing have to be graded as a test-like activity, in which the grading accuracy can be obtained from evaluating learners' proficiency scores.

In order to establish accurate, consistent, and fair grading, it is important to train the markers especially in large-scale writing assessments. Urhahne and Wijnia (2021) demonstrated that for professional markers, especially in direct writing assessments, some composition pieces are greatly difficult to be accurately graded than others. The characteristics of difficult-to-score essays have been investigated by Wang, Engelhard Jr, and Combs (2021). They figured out that 25% of the disagreements in the difficulty of accurately scoring an essay can be according to the essay's lexical diversity and its length. The unusual scoring challenges associated with these assessments have to be addressed in training sessions related to balanced reading and writing assessments. It is important to create a coherent frame that shows accurate scoring cognitive model for essay markers. Chang and Sung (2019) inferred various methods employed in markers' training sessions such as frame-of-reference course which is used in association with marker's mentoring accuracy and errors.

3.3.4 Literacy development in higher education

Hung and Van (2018) claim that language teachers who have high expectations for their learners should realize that they have to employ a variety of reading and writing activities in their classes before teaching the students what and how to read as part of the writing lessons. However, in writing studies, researchers rarely discuss the significance of reading and reading research. At university level, language teachers believe that students must know how to read and write well enough before starting their undergraduate studies. Similarly, researchers who investigate writing skills focused on what students read more than concentrating on whether

they know how to read well (Kim, Perscher, Wanzek, & Al Otaiba , 2018). Whatever the case is, it is important to realize that most of the courses at university level do not sufficiently emphasize learners' reading skills in order to improve them (Belet, Boyaci & Güner, 2018). According to Collins, Wolter, Meaux, and Alonzo (2020) first year college students face difficulty in a number of skills such as reading, critical thinking, vocabulary usage, defining research topics, writing a summary, creating written arguments, annotating texts, and reflection.

Lisenbee, Pilgrim, and Vasinda (2020) claim that the focus of writing has transformed from teachers' model passages to situating learners' ideas and language proficiency as the most important part in the writing class. Therefore, higher education learners have to learn both reading and writing skills as to gather information and write about it they must be able to read skillfully. They have to view the reading sources as an essential part in the writing process before starting the writing task (Arifani & Rosyid, 2016). The choices that writers make about a text's goal, genre, style, and audience are linked to how readers select, analyze, and understand texts. Irwansyah, Nurgiyantoro, and Sugirin (2019) affirm that having learners read the material that helps them widely investigate their culture permits them to see themselves in the context of the reading texts. Similarly, Farhat, Kamani, Mishra, and Wang (2017) think that critical thinking is connected to being able to read well as the learners should know how to establish their consciousness by reading and writing.

Javadi and Mohammadi (2019) suggest that higher education teachers have to support the reading comprehension of undergraduate students. Accordingly, to aid the learners with their reading and writing processes, it is suggested that teachers implement reading-to-write theories in the writing sessions and employ related reading classes that include critiquing textual ideas. To establish that reading and writing are interrelated, teachers can offer variety of reading-to-write activities to provide the learners with advanced reading practices, in addition they can select various genres that enable students to model and respond to them (Moore, 2018). Jawas (2019) has found that learners who spend greater time reading about what they are going to write about have less anxiety as they can formulate stronger vocabulary that helps them become better writers. As has been noted by Hung and Van (2018), undergraduate learners are more interested in learning reading than in learning writing, and to solve this problem, teachers can integrate these two skills in their classes.

The findings of a study by Howell, Butler, and Reinking (2017) suggest that the writing skills of learners who read, draft, and get feedback from teachers are enhanced particularly in grammar and mechanics utilization, vocabulary, analyzing complex passages, and the organization of thoughts. However, this study has not revealed to what extent students' writing has improved and in addition there is no mention of the number of learners whose writing skills improved.

In his study, Chan (2017) attributes students' improvement in writing to their development in reading skills. Nonetheless, the assessed writing improvements of the learners were not identified. In Sevy-Biloon's study (2018), in which he connected reading and writing courses, the writing performance of the learners in the experimental group was better than the students in the control group, but the researcher has not sufficiently clarified how these classes were linked and what the course assignments that learners used are. To sum up, the previously mentioned studies lacked a large number of participants and none of them used mixed methods research to gain more benefits by using different instruments.

Most of the previously mentioned studies lacked a large number of participants and none of them used mixed methods research to gain more benefits by using different instruments.

3.3.5 The interrelation between reading and writing instruction

While a great deal has been written on the theory and practice of communicative language teaching, there have been comparatively few studies of actual communicative language practices (Nunan, 1987). A classroom-based study of communicative language practice for Mustapha and Paramasivam (2018) revealed the persistence of non-communicative patterns of interaction. Another study for Hovious, Shinas, and Harper (2020) demonstrated that it is possible for teachers to foster more communicative language use. These studies demonstrate the importance of validating theory against what actually happens in the classroom.

Classroom-centered studies have gathered a remarkable body of knowledge about instructors' actual practices in their ESL classrooms, who have gone against what they think should be (Long & Sato, 1983).

The impact of systematic reading teaching on students' performance in writing skill is very well known. A reading-to-writing meta-analysis project was conducted by Graham et.al

(2018) in which the impact of systematic reading instruction on writing performance was investigated. This research includes 89 experimental studies. The findings of this project reveal that the systematic instruction of reading skills that consists of phonological awareness instruction, reading comprehension strategies, and phonics improved the learners' performance in writing skills that include spelling, writing output, and writing quality. They state that the effect size of systematic reading teaching on learners' general performance in essay writing and spelling was medium, but the size of the effect on writing output was small for k-college students.

Likewise, the effect of organized writing instruction on learners' reading comprehension is noted. Graham and Hebert (2011) conducted a writing-to-reading meta-analysis project in which they investigated the impact of systematic writing instruction on reading comprehension. This research includes 85 experimental studies. Their findings suggest that the systematic writing instruction that includes summary, reflection, generating questions and answers, and note-taking enhanced learners' reading comprehension. They affirm that the size of the effect on reading comprehension was medium for the learners in grade 4 to college and small for k-3 grades.

Research studies that examine the effect of self-dependent reading instruction on learners' writing skills and the impact of essay writing on reading skills are few. Lee and Schallert (2016) conducted a study in which they investigate the effect of independent reading on writing proficiency. The results demonstrate that from 36 studies, only three studies focused on the effect of independent reading on writing skills, while the focus of the remaining studies was on observing other readers, teacher-led reading, and reading individual words.

Similarly, another study by Ruan, Georgiou, Song, Li, and Shu (2018) which examines whether independent writing enhances learners' reading comprehension demonstrates that among nine studies, only three of them focused on the effect of independent writing on students' reading comprehension, unlike the others that focused on spelling practices, story-map writing, and invented spelling.

The previously mentioned findings provide evidence for the codirectional relationship between reading and writing instruction from grade one to college level. However, the effect of reading skills on learners' writing performance and the effect of essay writing on reading comprehension is still not obvious.

3.3.6 Effective essay writing

Jabbarova (2020) states, "Essay Writing is a skill which encourages ESL youngsters to communicate their own written messages while simultaneously developing their literacy skills in speaking and reading rather than delaying involvement in the writing process, as advocated in the past, until students have perfected their abilities in handwriting, reading, phonetics, spelling, grammar, and punctuation".

The teaching of writing has changed since the 1970s as at that time the focus was on the accuracy of writing mechanisms (i.e., capitalization, vocabulary use, spelling, punctuation marks, and grammar) (Norton, 1990; Savage & Mayer, 2006; Thomson & Droga, 2012). Chelling (2017) emphasizes that effective essay writing can be achieved by learning how to write through writing. The recent emphasis of writing instruction is on the procedures of the piece of writing rather than the final product.

According to Roberts (2017), the primary assumption of effective essay writing is that students are able to write, and the focus is on the quality of the content and the writing genres. Parab (2020) views essay writing as a skill that is based on the idea that the learners employ their intelligence to produce and share ideas with others. The recognition of a set of internal and external limitations is significant in this point of view as these limitations can be used as a means of recourses. Ramalingam, Pandian, Chetry, and Nigam (2018) affirm that a number of elements have to interact with each other to produce an effective essay such as knowledge of the topic, writing plan, and audience; obstacles the learners encounter (i.e., the topic); and planning, reviewing and reflecting.

For Ariyanti and Fitriana (2017), essay writing requires constructive procedures such as identifying the purpose for writing and deciding which information is needed about the topic. Ardiasih and Rasyid (2019) see essay writing as the natural medium for helping students to

reflect on their reading, speaking, and listening skills. Three interactive components form effective essay writing: learners' knowledge, the environment of the task, and the writing procedures (Mwinyi, 2017). The learners' knowledge involves the topic definitions, while the environment of the task includes the writing topic and the audience. The writing procedures involve brainstorming, stating, and reviewing. Brainstorming consists of generating ideas and writing strategies, while stating reformulates the ideas into the written forms. Reviewing includes reflecting and revising.

Levrai and Bolster (2019) represent the stages of effective essay writing as the following:

Planning ► drafting ► editing ► final draft

In the planning stage, three issues should be kept in the students' mind: the structure of the content, the purpose and the audience. The first version of a piece of writing is called drafting, while editing where students reflect, and revise is called the final version. Laba (2017) has suggested four steps to effective essay writing: prewriting, planning, writing drafts, and the final copy. Prewriting consists of two stages: topic selection and brainstorming. At this stage learner should choose a specific topic and start generating ideas that enable them to write using three techniques: classifying, assembling, and free writing. From Siddique and Singh's (2016) point of view, brainstorming is fast writing that emphasizes the comfort of the ideas and the words' flow. In the planning stage, the ideas that were generated in the brainstorming stage should be organized. In the third step, learners have to write their drafts and produce their final copy by writing the first draft, checking the organization, and making the corrections required before submitting the final copy. In the last stage, the learners have to proofread the draft for punctuation, grammar, and spelling.

The participants of those studies were school students. None of the previously mentioned studies focused on undergraduate students or first year learners.

3.3.7 The influence of reading on writing skills

Pao (2016) affirms that reading and writing skills support each other and unify other skills (listening and speaking). The reading habits are very helpful in passing leisure periods as

it helps the learners to gain knowledge from other cultures (Kim, 2017). Varisoglu (2016) has defined reading as a group of skills that involve understanding printed text that contains vocabulary and general and linguistic knowledge. Ho and Wey (2019) have found that there is a strong rationale for the complementary connection between reading and vocabulary as vocabulary growth depends on the amount of reading, and this growth leads to enhanced reading comprehension. Furthermore, there is an influential link between reading and writing, in which they affect each other (Axelsson, Lundqvist, & Sandberg, 2019). This correlation is presented in the organization of printed material that reflects the purpose of the text and the readers' expectations.

There is general agreement on the notion that the improvement of reading skills leads to enhancement of learners' ability to write (Hodges, Feng, Kuo, & McTigue, 2016; Colombo & Prior, 2016; Wong, 2018). Shanahan (2016, p.13) states that "reading comprehension and essay writing are interconnected and simultaneously are included between authors, between authors as authors, between readers, and between authors and readers".

Collins, Lee, Fox, and Madigan (2017) believe that writing skills instruction reinforces reading skills, which means that teaching grammar and spelling enhances learners' reading comprehension. For instance, writing a summary for a text boosts learners' reading, understanding, and thinking skills. A study by Jouhar and Rupley (2020) reveals that visual and nonvisual information are integrated by reading. This happens in such a way that the visual information in the text is associated with the nonvisual information that is in the learner's head to form meaning as the essential part of reading is combining the ideas together to create a meaningful body.

Reading and writing skills are considered as communication instruments in which the learners can understand the perceptions of others by producing a piece of writing for an imaginary audience (Wengelin & Arfé, 2017). This process encourages the learners to think and engage in printed material that is written by others. As stated by Graham and Hebert (2011), reading texts enable students to reflect using the logic rules when composing a piece of writing and at that point they can make their assumptions and premises explicit.

A number of research studies have investigated the impact of reading routines of Foundation students on their vocabulary bank, language comprehension, sentence structure, writing performance, and critical thinking skills (Schmitt, 2008; Mohammad Abdullah Attiyat, 2019; Sotvoldievich, 2022; García & Kleifgen, 2020; Din, 2020). These studies found out some of the reasons behind having unacceptable writing level especially for Foundation Program students. One of these reasons is that the impact of students' first language on their English language learning. Accordingly, it has been concluded that those students produce sentences that are literally translated from their first language into English, which leads to write essays that are difficult to be understood.

The study of Schmitt (2008) has investigated the impact of reading habits on learners' vocabulary bank and writing skills. The findings of this research indicated that only 11 % of 557 students in the Foundation Program involved in the study read during their leisure time. The results of Mohammad Abdullah Attiyat (2019) study have aligned with what Mohseni, Seifoori, and Ahangari (2020) who concluded that learners' demographic background that includes their social class, gender, age, parents' job, and residence area contemplated as considerable factors that would affect first year students' reading habits. These studies provided evidence about the powerful influence parents have on their kids which magically can help create active readers. The study of García and Kleifgen (2020) affirmed that female students are considered as keen readers compared with males. This study claimed that reading is not an interesting activity for men, and they have negative attitudes towards it. The researchers declared that male students especially those who are in their first year are unable to read more than two hours.

Foundation Program students cannot be considered heavy readers. Unfortunately, they are not even counted as moderate as they are barely able to read their tasks and assignments. Having such an attitude and routine extremely affects their performance in writing skills.

3.3.8 A balance in reading and writing instruction

Newman (1985) and DeFord (1986) have described the classes in which reading and writing instruction is balanced as “whole language” or literature-based approach considering reading and writing as the products of skills' acquisition classrooms. This approach focuses on exposing the learners to skills teaching with an emphasis on language and concentrating on

creating a supportive environment in which instructors motivate their students through various activities to improve their language skills.

Balanced reading and writing activities bring benefits to the learner with respect to both content learning and language learning processes such as fostering reading comprehension and focusing on writing, both of which are considered highly important in terms of content and language (National Research Council, 2012). In language learning, reading helps learners enrich their vocabulary bank and improve the structure of their sentences, which leads to enhancement of their performance in essay writing. In reference to content learning, balanced reading and writing activities assist in providing information that learners can later use in their writing tasks as reading is considered as input and writing as output (Pao, 2016).

In general, reading and writing difficulties could be a result of three factors: firstly, the lack of literacy material or having insufficient information on how it is supposed to be used (Reilly, Neumann, & Andrews, 2019). A question has to be raised about the effectiveness of class activities such as project-based ones that should be supported adequate reading and writing activities. The material of reading and writing that does not meet learners' needs is another factor leads to have literacy difficulties as it should meet students' socio-cultural life to enable them to apply and use the language outside the class (Altınmakas & Bayyurt, 2019). Thirdly, the material of reading and writing does not help students imagine, compile and process what they read (Tunmer & Hoover, 2019). The results of Wu, Yang, Scott Chen Hsieh, and Yamamoto (2020) study has supported Tunmer and Hoover findings by stating that a small number of students were being asked to employ their reading skills in order to use them when writing about their surroundings and events they witness.

Accordingly, as reading offers novel knowledge and supports learners in their writings, that leads us to contemplate the power of balancing reading and writing teaching. However, the previously mentioned studies did not report reliable information in terms of scoring written essays.

3.3.9 Teachers' perceptions regarding teaching reading and writing

It is essential to know the perspectives of English language instructors as some of them—either teach specifically L2 academic writing or have composition compatible with other courses— who currently teach L2 reading and writing especially in higher education have had little or no readiness to teach L2 writing (Braine, 1996; Williams, 1995). Ferris, Brown, Liu, and Stine (2011) study have corroborated that writing teachers in higher education lack professional preparation. This research has concentrated on how the instructors talked about the interdependent sections of evaluating learners' L2 writing. After surveying 129 instructors and interviewing 23—involving those who teach both L1 and L2 academic writing—to investigate the instructors' beliefs and practices in teaching writing, part of the results was related to the essential skills that L2 learners should have. The interview data revealed that “a small number of the teachers were entirely unacquainted with the existence of L2 writers in their classrooms or, if they were acquainted, felt sure that the background of learners' language was unsatisfactory” (Ferris, Brown, Liu, & Stine, 2011, p. 219). Additionally, the findings of this study have revealed that university writing instructors did not have “sufficient or proper preparation in how to teach L2 writing to non-native speakers” (Ferris, Brown, Liu, & Stine, 2011, p. 223). Echoing Williams (1995), Ferris et al. have mandated “the necessity of offering thorough and specified training to university instructors who teach academic writing whatever the courses they teach” (Ferris, Brown, Liu, & Stine, 2011, p. 225).

A number of researchers have claimed that instructors understand the nature of the responsibility they have for teaching reading and writing to non-native speakers, but the majority do not think they are well-prepared to fulfill their students' literacy needs (Bintz, 1997; Mallette, Henk, Waggoner, & Delany, 2005). After reviewing teachers' attitudes, Hall (2005) suggests that since instructors have some resistant and opposing beliefs about adopting new strategies in teaching literacy, in-service teachers are much more likely to value creating new techniques in teaching reading and writing. Nevertheless, there are teachers (especially in higher education) who are very confident and able to implement novel teaching strategies believe that they are unfamiliar with integrating reading and writing skills in their classes and they did not get sufficient preparation to meet the general literacy needs of their learners (Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, & Mueller, 2001).

The current research proposes the findings of previously mentioned studies that evolved the support and resources the teachers of the Foundation Program need to effectively deliver their course material and improve their students' language skills.

3.4 Summary

The primary purpose of writing this chapter was to introduce the conceptual and theoretical frameworks from which this study is established and to analyze the literature that briefed the current research. Reviewing the literature on balanced reading and writing instruction in various contexts demonstrates that a balance in teaching reading and writing would have a number of benefits if it is appropriately implemented along with enough training and time. In particular, this balance would enhance English language skills of Foundation Program students, self-confidence, self-evaluation, and interaction as well. In addition, it has its positive impact on the students' attitudes, too.

However, the gains of balanced reading and writing instruction and its impact on students' writing skills vary in the degrees and size effects due to the context in which they are applied. Considering the challenges that students face in learning writing skills, it can be concluded that it is necessary to think about the methods of teaching reading and writing, especially in higher education.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The current study aims to investigate the practices of Foundation Program teachers in their reading and writing classes and how would the implementation of balanced reading and writing instruction affect learners' essay writing skills in tertiary institutions in the UAE. This study is a trial to answer the questions below:

- 1- What are the Foundation Program instructors' perceptions and practices regarding implementing a balance in teaching L2 reading and writing?
- 2- How does a balance in teaching L2 reading and writing enhance Foundation Program learners' writing performance in higher educational institutions in the UAE?

One hypothesis has been tested in order to address the second research question: there are no statistically significant differences between the intervention and control group of achievement post-test scores after controlling the pre-test scores as a covariate.

This chapter presents the philosophical and methodological decisions that support the framework of the current research, and clarifies and rationalizes the design of the study. Then the research methods are explained and justified. This is followed by a description of the sampling procedure before addressing the data collection procedures and analysis. Finally, the steps taken to ensure the quality of the research are presented.

4.2 Research approach

A number of researchers have underlined the significance of giving a clear statement of research methods to presenting the evidence credibility (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2014). In the current study a mixed methods approach has been adopted as quantitative and qualitative methods inform the design of each other, in which the triangulation of the methods enhances the credibility and consistency of the data (Grbich, 2010; Richards, 2003). Fraenkel *et. al.* (1993, p. 559) have defined mixed methods approach as “a research methodology in which the researcher collects, analyses, and mixes (integrates or connects) both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or a multiphase program of inquiry”.

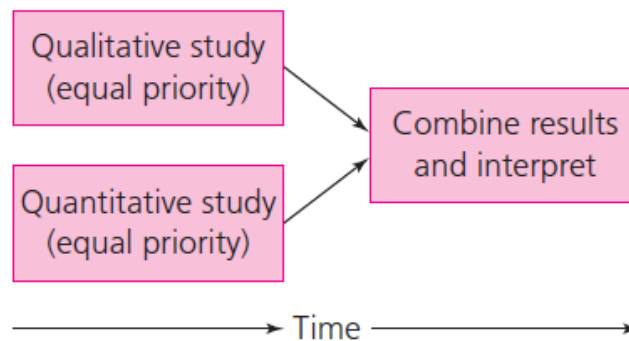


Figure 3: A Triangulation Design in mixed methods approach (Adapted from Creswell and Plano Clark, 2006, p. 176)

The rationale for using a mixed-methods approach can be included in a number of points: it clarifies relationships discovered to exist between variables, helps the researcher study the links between the variables in depth, cross-validate the connections found between variables, and allows the use of various designs that would include philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 1993). Ray (2007) states that the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches enables the researcher to better understand the research problem and complicated phenomena than either approach alone. Better understanding can be obtained, for instance, by the triangulation of the results that leads to enhance the validity of inferences. Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) suggest four additional reasons along with triangulation. The first one is that its complementarity, which helps in seeking elaboration, illustration, enhancement, and clarification of the results from one method with the findings from the other method. In addition, it helps the researcher uses the results from one method to help develop or inform the use of the other method. Moreover, Triangulation direct the researcher to discover paradoxes and contradictions, which lead to the research questions being reframed. Finally, it assists the researcher in extending the breadth and range of inquiry by using different methods for different inquiry components.

In the current study, the mixed methods approach has been employed to assess the practices of Foundation Program instructors in their reading and writing classes. It essentially investigates whether there is a balance in teaching reading and writing or not. In addition, it

examines how the implementation of that balance would lead to strengthen the learners' performance in English language in general and essay-writing in particular in tertiary institutions in the UAE. The quantitative data have been collected from teachers' questionnaire to answer the first question. The qualitative data have been collected from an experiment that consisted of intervention in addition to pre- and post-achievement tests to answer the research's second question. The methods of the research questions are clarified in the table below:

Table 1: The methods of the research questions

Research Question	Data Collection Tool	Experimental Design	Participants	Data Analysis Technique
What are Foundation Program's instructors' perceptions and practices regarding a balance in teaching reading and writing?	Questionnaire	Purposive sampling	Foundation Program instructors	Quantitative
How a balance in teaching L2 reading and writing would enhance Foundation Programs learners' writing performance?	Document analysis	Convenient sampling	Foundation Program students	Qualitative
	Interviews with instructors.	Convenient sampling	Foundation Program instructors	Qualitative

4.3 Study structure

A number of researchers such as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), Creswell (2009), and Crotty (2003) have asserted that the philosophical assumptions of the researcher regarding

ontology (the nature of reality and social reality) and epistemology (the nature of knowledge) significantly affect the selection of the methods used in educational research.

According to Grix (2010) and Guba and Lincoln (1994), research in the education field is mostly built on three paradigms: post-positivism, constructivism, and interpretivism. The ontological and epistemological assumptions of these paradigms are not the same. The current study is a combination of post-positivism, constructivism, and interpretive paradigms. It aims to uncover teachers' views regarding the methods used in teaching reading and writing in higher education institutions to explore how such methods would affect students' performance in these two skills.

4.3.1 Pragmatism paradigm

Pragmatism is a philosophical paradigm that has influenced research methodologies, particularly in social sciences and education (Johnson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Pragmatism emphasizes the practical consequences of beliefs, actions, and ideas as the ultimate test of their truth and validity (Phillips, Phillips, & Burbules, 2000). In the context of research, the pragmatism paradigm is often associated with a flexible and problem-solving approach that focuses on practical solutions and real-world applications (Yin, 2006; Creswell & Garrett, 2008; Creswell, & Poth, 2016).

Pragmatism as a research paradigm refuses to get involved in the contentious metaphysical concepts such as truth and reality. Instead, it accepts that there can be single or multiple realities that are open to empirical inquiry (Panhwar, Ansari, & Shah, 2017). Pragmatist researchers have offered their particular opinion that there is an objective reality that exists apart from human experience. However, this reality is grounded in the environment and can only be encountered through human experience (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996; Young & Ryan, 2020; Holliday & Macdonald, 2020). A major underpinning of pragmatist philosophy is that knowledge and reality are based on beliefs and habits that are socially constructed (Mumba & ALICI, 2021). Pragmatists generally agree that all knowledge in this world is socially constructed, but some versions of those social constructions match individuals' experiences more than others (McCrudden & Marchand, 2020).

Margolis and Zunjarwad (2018) remind us to not to merely understand pragmatism as a philosophical position but rather as a set of philosophical tools of value for addressing problems. As a research paradigm, pragmatism orients itself toward solving practical problems in the real world. It emerged as a method of inquiry for more practical-minded researchers (Kelly, Dowling, & Millar, 2018). For pragmatists, an inquiry—in both social life and social work research—is effective only if it achieves its purposes. Pragmatism rejects traditional philosophical dualism of objectivity and subjectivity and allows the researcher to abandon the forced dichotomies which are postpositivism and constructivism (Ghiara, 2020). In pragmatism, empirical is preferred over idealistic or rationalistic approaches. Rather than assigning postpositivism and constructivism in two different ontological and epistemological camps, pragmatism asks the researcher to focus on the two different approaches to inquiry (Sutinen, 2008; Splitter, 2009; Henson, 2015).

Unlike positivistic researchers, who assert an objective knowledge acquired by examining empirical evidence and hypothesis testing, and constructivists, who propose that knowledge is relative, and reality is too complex, pragmatists believe that the process of acquiring knowledge is a continuum rather than two opposing and mutually exclusive poles of either objectivity or subjectivity (McPhail, 2016). Thus, pragmatism is situated somewhere in the center of the paradigm continuum in terms of mode of inquiry. Postpositivism typically supports quantitative methods and deductive reasoning, whereas constructivism emphasizes qualitative approaches and inductive reasoning; however, pragmatism embraces the two extremes and offers a flexible and more reflexive approach to research design (Alimisis, Moro, Arlegui, Pina, Frangou, & Papanikolaou, 2007). In adopting this stance, the pragmatist researcher is able to select the research design and the methodology that are most appropriate to address the research question. Pragmatism is typically associated with abductive reasoning that moves back and forth between deduction and induction. In this way, the researcher is actively involved in creating data as well as theories (Phillips, 2000).

Another important consideration is the aspect of pragmatism that is a part of a researcher's worldview and therefore can influence the way researchers conduct their project. The concept of paradigms has been explored as a set of shared beliefs among a research community to elaborate on what counts as the most important research questions and the most

appropriate research methodology (Taber, 2019). This is important as not all research questions are fundamentally important, nor are the methodologies automatically appropriate. Ultimately, it is the researcher who makes the choices and decides which question is important and what methodology is appropriate, and those choices are certainly influenced by the aspects of sociopolitical location of the researcher, his/her personal history, and his/her belief system (Henson, 2015)

4.4 Study design

The equivalent groups design has been adopted to test the research hypothesis and answer the second research question. Two equal groups (intervention and control groups) have been selected. The experimental factors introduced in a balanced instruction program have been applied on the intervention group, while the control group has been taught using the traditional methods. Miller, Smith, and Pugatch (2020) have suggested that using more than one group in education research helps in avoiding the deformity of one group design. This means that it is better to apply the experiment factors on one group and leave the other one in its own natural status. Consequently, the difference in the results of both the experimental and the control groups has determined the effectiveness of the intervention and the variables that affected the intervention group. Accordingly, the following design has been employed to examine the hypothesis of the current research and answer the research second question.

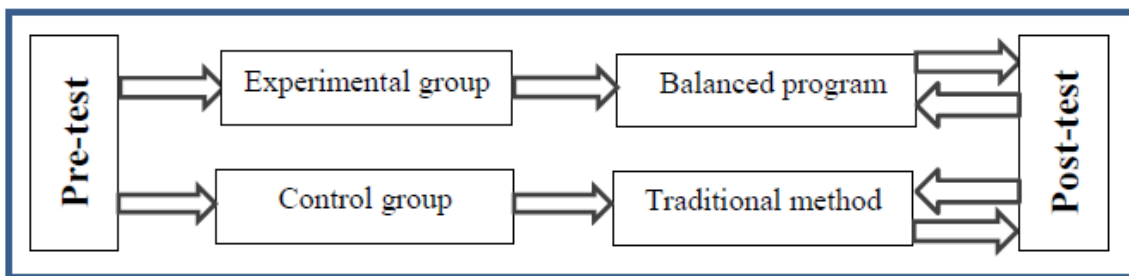


Figure 4: The study design

4.5 Methodology

4.5.1 Study context

The current study has been conducted at one of the public higher education institutions in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It is one of the largest institutions of applied higher learning in the UAE. 14,246 female and 6,744 male students enrolled at 16 campuses throughout the whole country during the 2019-2020 academic year and more than 67,000 UAE nationals are graduates of the college.

The institution has six academic departments: business, education, engineering technology, computer and information science, applied communications, and health sciences. Faculty recruited from around the world and English is used as a medium of instruction. There are 16 campuses throughout the country, with separate colleges for male and female students. They are located in the cities of Abu Dhabi, Al Ain, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah and Sharjah, as well as in the Al Dhafra region that is part of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

The majority of students are Emirati nationals while very few come from other countries such as Eritrea. Therefore, the participants are homogenous as most of them share a similar background in terms of first language, culture, religion, and education. Since the medium of instruction is English, it is necessary that students have the linguistic ability to study in English. The General Academic Requirements Division (GARD) is designed to support students in improving their English language proficiency through English language courses to enhance their academic writing and communicative ability. English Communications program (ECP) – previously known as Foundation Program- is part of GARD division that created for those who did not meet the English language requirement of the college. ECP aims to develop learners' skills in English language to prepare them for higher studies in different areas of specialization. The materials used in the ECP, and other departments are both imported and in-house prepared and all for 16 weeks, but semester 3 is an intensive summer semester and lasts for around 5 weeks. Students have 15 contact hours of English in A2 level per week whereas they have 10 contact hours of English in B1 level per week. In B1+ level, students have six contact hours of English a week. For students to pass from one level to another, they need to score 60% of the total assessment score. In addition, students are allowed to fail a level only once. If they fail twice, then they will be dismissed from the ECP.

4.5.2 Sampling, Population, and Participants selection

Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (1993, p. 90) have defined the population of a research as “the larger group to which the researcher hopes to apply the results”. Accordingly, the population of the current study is all instructors who teach in English Communications Program (ECP) who count (40 instructors). In addition to all students who study in ECP who count (60 students) at one of the higher educational institutions at Aldhafra campuses in the UAE.

For Cohen (2013), sampling is an essential element to be considered in research, as it would affect the quality of results and findings. Keeping this in mind, the sampling approach that has been employed to collect the data for the questionnaire is purposive sampling. This is because the researcher wants to investigate the teaching methods used by Ph.D. holders and the ones used by master’s degree holders and explore the difference between them. Thirty-five instructors have answered the instructors’ questionnaire. The vast majority of them are master’s degree holders and they teach A2 and B1 level students. In the interviews, the researcher has adopted convenient sampling. This is because the target institution has 16 campuses that are located all over the UAE. Accordingly, it is not possible for the researcher to interview each ECP teacher in each campus, so she decided to choose four campuses and interview ECP instructors who are available. Seven instructors were interviewed. Two of them were Ph.D. holders and the other five had master’s degree. The table below clarifies the details of instructors who participated in instructor’s questionnaire and interviews and their background information:

Table 2: Instructors’ demographic information

Instrument Participant	Master’s Degree Holders	Ph.D. Degree Holders	Years of Experience	Level of their Students
Instructor’s Questionnaire	29	6	1-20	A2
				B1
Instructor’s Interviews	5	2	1-16	A2
				B1

The sampling technique that has been used for the writing achievement tests is convenience sampling as it is an effective way of getting learners to participate in the study. Forty students who study in English Communications Program (previously known as Foundation Program) have participated in the current study. Twenty students were in the control group and 20 students in the intervention group. All students were female, and they have similar achievement level. All of them are in Level 4 (the last level in Foundation Program). All the participants have conditioned admission, as they have not met the college requirements to enroll in the program stream. Moreover, the participants' age variable has been controlled before conducting the intervention. The details of achievement tests participants are presented in the table below:

Table 3: Students' demographic information

Group	Gender	English Level	EMSAT Score	Age Average
Intervention	Female	B1	900-1075	17-18
Control	Female	B1	900-1075	17-18

4.5.3 Data collection instruments

A number of researchers such as Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls and Ormston (2014) and Grbich (2010) suggest that it is important to clarify the research methods in order to display the credibility of the evidence. Richards (2003) says that in mixed methods approach each method introduces the outlines of the other, which enables the triangulation of the methods that leads to boost the credibility of the data.

The researcher has used three different data collection tools to find an answer to the research questions. She has used a close-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to assess teachers' classroom practices and perceptions regarding implementing a balance in teaching reading and writing in the Foundation Program. To measure the learners' achievement in reading and writing, the researcher will use a pre-posttest. A detailed description and justification of the tools used have been introduced in the below sections. The diagram below clarifies the steps of data collection.

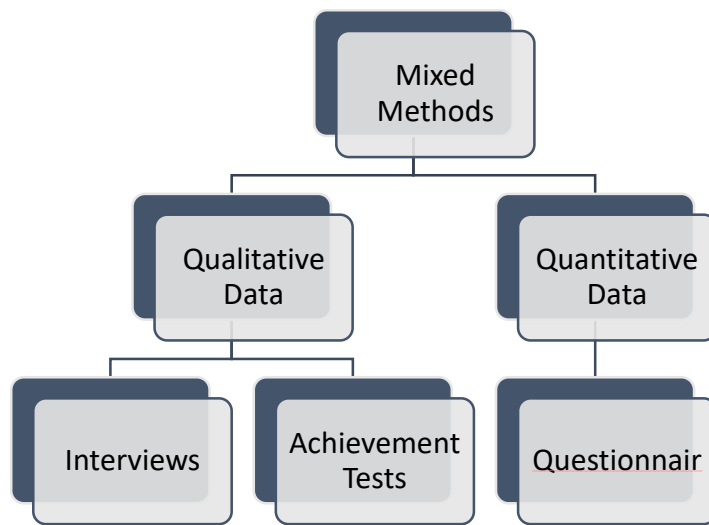


Figure 5: The steps of data collection

4.5.3.1 Close-ended questionnaire

Brown (2001) considers questionnaire as one of the most preferred instruments used in social sciences because it can be easily constructed and allows collecting large amount of information about a population through a representative sample. On the other hand, the use of questionnaires has limitations as they give superficial data, because of that they are not appropriate for in-depth investigation as the participants rely on their own understanding to answer a question (Dörnyei, 2007). However, Chapple (2015) claims that questionnaires are the instrument that is mostly employed in ESL studies.

In the current study, the researcher has used a self-constructed close-ended questionnaire (Appendix 4). The quantitative data obtained from the statistical analysis of the questionnaire were used to manifest the instructors' perceptions and practices regarding implementing a balance in teaching reading and writing in higher education institutions. In addition, it helps in formulating the interview questions that have been employed as a second data collection tool.

The questionnaire has been used to determine the instructors' attitudes and practices regarding teaching reading and writing. It consists of four sections. The first section includes demographic information about the participants' profiles such as their education, years of experience in higher education, instructors' job title, campus, and their students' level. The

descriptive data in this section allows the researcher to find out any possible connection between instructors' background and their response to the questions in part two, three, and four. The second section consists of fifteen questions related to instructors' practices in teaching reading and writing for Foundation Program students and the strategies they use in teaching these two skills. In addition, the second section of the questionnaire has been designed to investigate the instructors' perceptions and attitudes toward the implementation of balanced reading and writing instruction. The teaching strategies included in this section were selected from a number of previous studies such as Keshta and Harb (2013), Mokhamar (2016), and Qaddumi (2021). In the third section, most of the questions reflect the connection between reading and writing and how instructors employ this connection to enhance their learners' performance in writing skills. Finally, in the fourth section the researcher investigates instructors' opinions about the implementation of balanced reading and writing instruction, and how that would influence learners' writing abilities.

4.5.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

Punch and Oancea (2014) have noted that a large number of researchers use interviews as an instrument to collect their data in qualitative research. Troudi and Jendli (2011) have stated that the use of interviews is mostly associated with the employment of questionnaires in ESL studies.

The rationale behind using interviews is that it helped the researcher explore more extensive issues that have been detected amidst instructors' questionnaire, which would lead to a comprehensive awareness of instructors' points of view, behaviors, and feelings. Mainly, the interviewed instructors have been asked to give reasons for their practice in reading and writing classes. In addition, it has brought to light the justifications for having such an attitude and the reasons behind implementing some techniques and teaching strategies in their reading and writing classes, something that the old data collection processes are not prepared to explore. Primarily, the interviews have shown the beliefs that are not shared by the majority.

In the current study, the researcher has used interviews (Appendix 2) as a main tool to explore Foundation Program instructors' practices, and how they interpret their experience. It was also used to examine how those instructors would implement a balance in teaching reading

and writing, and the impact of using such balance on learners' writing abilities. Moreover, interviews were employed to give Foundation Program instructors a chance to elaborately talk about the problems they might face when implementing a balance in teaching reading and writing and how they construct their reality (Evans & Morrison, 2011).

The research questions and the preliminary analysis of the data collected from instructor's questionnaire have basically guided the form of the scheduled interviews. The guidelines provided by Woolfolk and Shaughnessy (2004) have been considered by the researcher in order to formulate the questions of the interview. Those guidelines allowed the researcher to achieve depth in content and comprehensively cover the research key issues. The interviews were semi-structured, in which the researcher focused on covering the questions' themes and allowed the participants to give more details about the issues as they come out during the interview. To get an idea about the length of the interview and identify any ambiguity or confusion, the interview was piloted with two instructors in order to edit and modify the questions before their actual usage. Consequently, some interview questions were cancelled for two reasons: the answer of the instructors could be biased as they teach in the Foundation Program, and some of the questions were being answered during the conversation and there is no need to ask them again. The wording and the order of the questions depended on the flow of each interview.

The process of inviting Foundation Program instructors for the interview was not started directly. Seventeen participants were contacted via email and via phone before being managed to make appointments with seven of them. The purpose of the interview was briefly clarified orally for those who were invited by phone and written for those who were invited by email. Before starting the interview, confidentiality and anonymity were assured and the aim of the research and the interview was briefly explained. In addition, it has been clarified that there are no correct or incorrect answers, and the interviews are not judgmental. Finally, the participants were asked to sign the consent form (Appendix 2). A small digital device was used in order to audio record the interviews. To ask relevant follow up questions, the researcher tried to listen carefully to what is said (Brown & Danaher, 2019). As the interview participants have given in-depth responses, the researcher employed an inquiry strategy to encourage them to give more clarification when it is needed. Finally, each interview lasted between 40 – 50 minutes.

4.5.3.3 Writing achievement tests

Monaghan (2007) considers the test as the most common instruments to measure learners' achievement as it can be employed to measure the extent of students' achievement in a skill according to determined instructional objectives at the end of a specific timeframe. The quasi-experimental approach has been adopted as it suits the nature of the study. It aims to examine the effectiveness of a balance in teaching reading and writing in ECP.

Writing achievement tests have been prepared (Appendix 1) to measure the improvement in learners' performance in English writing skills. The tests aim to measure the effect of a balance in teaching reading and writing on learners' essay writing performance. The tests have been designed according to the objectives of each level and the percentage weight for each domain according to standards of ECP. The tests have been used to measure learners' writing performance in the following skills: writing a coherent essay, essay development, essay unity, receptive topic sentence, paragraph coherence, concluding paragraph, supporting sentence, and paragraph cohesion. The test consists of nine questions and its total weight is 40.

4.5.3.3.1 Literacy balanced instruction program

The Four Resources Model has been adopted in the intervention that has been conducted with the experimental group. Luke and Freebody (1999) have developed this model to affirm that the instructors' practices when teaching English reading and writing skills in class cannot be divided. They are required to create an authentic and purposeful context to achieve the desired outcomes. Accordingly, having a balance when teaching these two skills evokes learners' ability to combine the theoretical and practical aspects of the texts (Serafini, 2012). For this reason, Luke and Freebody (1999) summed up four explicit strategies that enable the reader to make meaning from the texts and employ these techniques in improving his/her writing skills. The strategies used in Four Resources Model are clarified in the figure below:

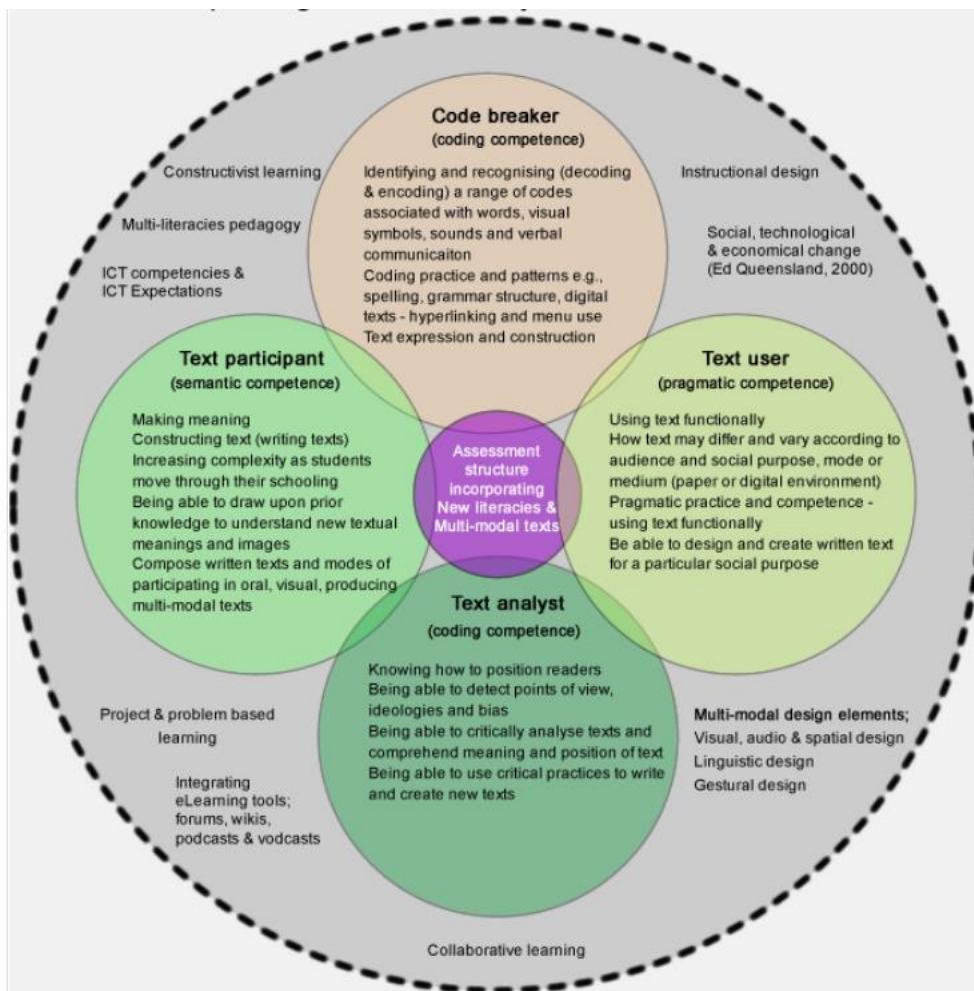


Figure 6: Luke and Freebody Four Resources Model (1999)

The rationale for adopting Four Sources Model is that it complies with the scientific thinking approach. In addition, it follows logical teaching and learning progression that starts from identifying and analyzing students' needs to fulfilling these needs.

4.5.3.3.2 Procedures of literacy balanced instruction program

In the beginning, it was important to identify the academic needs of Foundation Program learners and the learning resources available that would facilitate applying the intervention. Before identifying learners' academic needs, it was required to understand their characteristics. All information regarding their characteristics was obtained from the institution's academic services. The intervention participants have similar characteristics such as all of them were

female students; all the participants were between 17 – 18; they were studying in the same campus; and they have similar social, cultural, economic, and academic levels. These data allowed the researcher to understand the academic needs of Foundation Program learners and figure out the need for enhancing their writing abilities. These needs urged preparing a program that could fulfill the writing skills required for Foundation Program students. The following procedures were followed to formulate the literacy balanced instruction program.

The initial list of the needed writing skills has been prepared after reviewing the relevant literature. After that, the domains of the intervention (Form, coherence, and cohesion) were developed and sent to a panel of experienced referees to determine its validity. Then, the final draft has been designed in accordance with referee's feedback and suggestions. The content of the intervention was analyzed to decide the weight of each skill.

4.5.3.3.3 The design of literacy balanced instruction program

In this stage, the outcomes of the program were constructed, the program's content was determined, the program's required strategies have been decided, and finally, the implementation process has been set.

The major outcome of a balanced instruction program is to examine the impact of implementing a balance in teaching reading and writing on learners writing performance. In fact, the program's content, strategies, resources, and assessment tools were designed in accordance with this objective and were selected to correspond with the academic needs of Foundation Program's learners. Consequently, the following writing outcomes have been decided: capitalization, punctuation, sentence structure, writing a proper topic sentence, writing appropriate supporting sentences, writing a conclusion, employing proper cohesive devices, and writing a coherent essay.

The content of the program consisted of various activities that mainly focused on English reading and writing. Bookwidgets, Nearpod sessions, essay writing booklets, kahoot and quizlet were employed to motivate the participants and engage them in the intervention classes.

The input of the achievement tests has been selected in the light of the reviewed literature, experts' recommendations, and researcher's experience. The following procedures were considered during the design of the achievement tests: The writing skills required for Foundation Program students have been prepared, the percentage of each skill has been

determined, a table of specifications has been built, and the number of questions has been decided. After that, the test was piloted and then the final draft was issued.

The strategies used in a balanced instruction program were think aloud strategy, write to learn strategy, combining sentences, training and practicing strategy, and study mentor texts.

The implementation of the program lasted for one month. The program started on March 1, 2022, and finished on March 31, 2022. It consisted of 46 hours of class interaction. All the classes were held in the college from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM. The implementation of a balanced instruction program was conducted by the researcher on the intervention group, and it was according to the previously mentioned schedule. In the intervention stage, the researcher played various roles. Sometimes, she taught writing skills by giving examples from reading passages. Once in a while, she played the role of facilitator who gave clear instructions about what is required from students to do, and then monitored learners' practices and gave feedback.

4.5.4 Study variables

The current study includes dependent and independent variables, which are clarified as the following:

Dependent variables are introduced in the writing ability of Foundation Program students and the improvement of students' essay writing skills. On the other hand, the independent variables would be introduced in both a balanced instruction program and learners' general performance in English language. A balanced instruction program includes the use of the intervention and the use of traditional methods, while learners' general performance in English language includes high achievers and low achievers.

4.5.4.1 Variables control

Before conducting the intervention, some variables have been controlled to avoid any marginal interference and ensure the accuracy of the results.

4.5.4.1.1 Participants' age

The records of students' age have been obtained from their files by the help of college academic services at the beginning of 2021-2022 academic year. The researcher has used a T-

test to find out any statistical differences. The results show that there are no statistically significant differences for the age variable at (0.05) between the groups (intervention and control). The details of results of the T-test are presented in table (4) below:

Table 4: T-test results of age control

Group	No. of Participants	Difference	Mean	St. Deviation	T-test Value	Sig.	Sig. Level
Intervention	20	39	17.5	0.232	1.000	0.164	Not significant
Control	20		17	0.123			

“t” table value at (39) d.f. at (0.05) sig. level equals 1.575.

“t” table value at (39) d.f. at (0.01) sig. level equals 2.318

4.5.4.1.2 Participants’ general performance in English language

The researcher has used T-test to find out any statistical differences in learners’ general performance in English language. Learners’ scores in EMSAT test during 2021-2022 academic year have been analyzed. The results indicate that there are no statistically significant differences for the variables of participants’ general performance in English language at (0.05) between the groups (intervention and control). The details of the T-test results are presented in table (5) below:

Table 5: T-test results of learners’ performance control

Group	No. of Participants	Difference	Mean	St. Deviation	T-test Value	Sig.	Sig. Level
Intervention	20	39	76.00	16.28	0.324	0.322	Not significant
Control	20		71.66	17.431			

“t” table value at (39) d.f. at (0.05) sig. level equals 1.575.

“t” table value at (39) d.f. at (0.01) sig. level equals 2.318

4.5.4.1.3 Participants’ essay writing ability

The researcher used pre-test to measure learners’ English writing ability and ensure that they are similar in their English writing achievement. The results show that there are no statistically significant differences for participants’ writing ability variable at (0.05) between the groups (intervention and control). The details of T-test results are presented in table (6) below:

Table 6: T-test results of learners' essay writing ability

Group	No. of Participants	Difference	Mean	St. Deviation	T-test Value	Sig.	Sig. Level
Intervention	20	39	12.2400	4.758	0.26	0.378	Not significant
Control	20		12.200	4.546			

"t" table value at (39) d.f. at (0.05) sig. level equals 1.575.

"t" table value at (39) d.f. at (0.01) sig. level equals 2.318

4.5.5 Pilot study

The achievement tests have been operated at one of the higher educational institutions (HEI) in AlDafrah region. A sample of (10) students who have the same characteristics as the main sample of the study has taken the tests. The tests' results have been recorded and statistically analyzed to assess the validity and reliability as well as the time needed.

4.5.5.1 Test validity and reliability

In the current research, the researcher has created one achievement test for B1 level students. Creswell (2012, p.212) defines valid test as "the one that measures what it is designed to measure". In the current study, the content-related validity, referee validity, the difficulty coefficient of the test and the internal consistency have been used to check the validity of the test.

4.5.5.1.1 Test content validity

For the content related validity, the skills initial draft has been prepared to include the skills that were tested. To examine the list's suitability to the English content for ECP students, the list, in its initial draft, has been introduced to a panel of specialists in English language and methodology from Higher Colleges of Technology, Ministry of Education, and experienced supervisors in other universities. The items on the list have been modified according to their recommendations.

4.5.5.1.2 Test referee validity

In referee validity, the test was introduced to a jury of specialists in English language and methodology in Higher Colleges of Technology, Ministry of Education and experienced supervisors.

4.5.5.1.3 Test difficulty coefficient

The difficulty coefficient of the test has been measured by finding out the percentage of the correct answers of each item made by the students. The coefficient of difficulty of each item has been calculated according to the following formula:

$$\text{Difficulty Coefficient} = \frac{\text{No. of students who gave correct answers}}{\text{the total number of students}}$$

Table (7) below presents the difficulty coefficient for each item of the achievement test. The results have revealed that the item difficulty index range between (0.43-0.69) for pre-test and (0.49-0.69) for post-test with an average of (0.56). Therefore, if the item difficulty index falls between (0.31-0.75), it is considered as acceptable level of difficulties from point of assessment and evaluation specialists.

Table 7: Difficulty coefficient for each item of the writing achievement test

No.	Difficulty coefficient (Pre-test)	Difficulty coefficient (Post-test)
1	0.63	0.58
2	0.52	0.64
3	0.43	0.56
4	0.45	0.57
5	0.51	0.69

6	0.62	0.55
7	0.69	0.52
8	0.55	0.54
9	0.47	0.49
Average	0.55	0.57

4.5.5.1.4 Test internal consistency validity

The internal consistency validity indicates the correlation of the score of each item with the total average of the test. It also indicates the correlation of the average of each domain with the total average. This validity has been calculated by using Pearson Formula.

Table 8: Correlation coefficient of every item of the Writing achievement test

No.	Pearson Correlation	No.	Pearson Correlation
1	*0.282	10	**0.447
2	**0.428	11	**0.512
3	**0.475	12	**0.499
4	**0.370	13	**0.607
5	**0.487	14	*0.261
6	**0.375	15	**0.440
7	*0.273	16	**0.450
8	*0.336	17	*0.264
9	*0.346	18	**0.367

*r table value at df (26) and sig. level (0.05) = 0.250

**r table value at df (26) and sig. level (0.01) = 0.352

Table (9) suggests that the test items' correlations were significant at (0.05, 0.01). This can be interpreted as there is a consistency between the items, which indicates that the test is highly valid for the current research.

Table 9: Pearson Correlation coefficient for every skill in the Writing achievement test

Writing Skill	Pearson Correlation	Sig. level
Writing a coherent paragraph	*0.282	sig. at 0.05
Paragraph development.	**0.501	sig. at 0.01
Paragraph Unity	**0.502	sig. at 0.01
Receive Topic Sentence	**0.410	sig. at 0.01
productive Paragraph Unity	**0.550	sig. at 0.01
productive Topic Sentence	**0.440	sig. at 0.01
Paragraph Coherence	**0.450	sig. at 0.01
Concluding sentence	*0.264	sig. at 0.05
Supporting Sentences	**0.367	sig. at 0.01
Paragraph Cohesion	**0.371	sig. at 0.01

According to table (9), there is correlation between the skills and the total score and each scope with the other scopes at sig. level (0.01, 0.05). This indicates a high internal consistency of the writing achievement test, which leads to the conclusion that the validity of the test is reinforced.

4.5.5.1.5 Test reliability

Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (1993, p. 154) consider the test as reliable when “it gives the same results in case of applying it again for the same purpose in the same conditions”. In the current study, the researcher has measured the test reliability by using interclass correlation (ICC). The result in table (10) indicates the ICC at (0.78), which means that the test has a good reliability index.

Table 10: Interclass coefficient reliability

Absolute agreement	ICC	Model
Average measure	0.782	Two-way mixed effect

4.5.5.1.6 Validity of balanced instruction program

The first version of a balanced instruction program was submitted to the college research committee to test its validity. It has been modified according to the committee's feedback and suggestions. Then, a list of criteria was prepared and given to the same research committee to give their recommendations and was modified accordingly. After that, the research committee evaluated the material used in the program in accordance with the given criteria list. Finally, the final version of the program was issued and implemented to achieve the desired outcomes.

4.5.5.1.7 Piloting a balanced instruction program

A balanced instruction program was piloted with ten students studying in Foundation Program to ensure its suitability. In addition, it was important to figure out any obstacles or problems that might hinder the program's implementation with the intervention group. Moreover, there was a need to determine the time needed to apply the intervention with the research sample.

4.5.5.2 Instructors' questionnaire

The researcher has created a questionnaire to measure teachers' attitudes regarding the teaching methods used in Foundation Programs to teach reading and writing. The validity of the questionnaire has been tested using referee validity, in which the recommendations of the experts have been employed to modify it.

A questionnaire can be considered reliable when it gives the same results if it is reapplied in the same conditions (Creswell, 2012, p.215). The reliability of the questionnaire has been tested using Cronbach alpha which is a method to measure the internal consistency among all

items of the questionnaire. Table (11) below has revealed that the scale of instructors' attitude is reliable as Cronbach Alpha is ($\alpha = 0.912$).

Table 11: The reliability of teachers' questionnaire

Section	Total	Cronbach Alpha Coefficient
Background	5	0.760
rationale	15	0.878
Action	8	0.755
efficient	3	0.836
Total	31	0.912

4.5.5.3 Teachers' interviews

The researcher has used the guideline provided by Woolfolk and Shaughnessy (2004) to create the teachers' interview questions in order to allow the participant to elaborate on emergent issues related to implementing a balance in teaching reading and writing in Foundation Programs. The interview has been piloted with two teachers to identify any confusing or ambiguous questions to amend it before their real usage.

4.5.6 Procedures of data collection

In the current study, the researcher collected both qualitative and quantitative data during the second semester of 2021 – 2022 academic year. Instructors' questionnaire was used to collect the quantitative data and it has been administered at the beginning of the second semester in January 2022. On the other hand, document analysis and semi-structured interviews were employed to collect the qualitative data. Document analysis was started in April 2022, after having Foundation Program students underwent an intervention that lasted for one month. Finally, the semi-structured interviews have been held at the beginning of February 2022. To

increase the trustworthiness of the data, the procedures of the data collection are presented in the following section.

4.5.6.1 Collection of quantitative data

4.5.6.1.1 Questionnaire construction

The guidelines provided by Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009) were employed to create instructors' questionnaire (Appendix 4). The items of the questionnaire have been written according to the research questions and relevant literature, which helped demonstrate content validity of the research instrument. Initially, the questionnaire comprises of two sections. The first section consisted of seven items that were about participants' demographic information. The second section included thirteen items that investigated Foundation Program instructors' perceptions regarding the implementation of a balance in teaching reading and writing. Items 8-11 and 17 – 20 corresponded to the first research question. Two of Foundation Program Team Leaders (PTLs) have reviewed the questionnaire in order to ensure its comprehensibility. Depending on their feedback, the questionnaire has been modified to include four sections. The items of section one have been decreased to five questions that are best connected to the research questions. Section 2 included sixteen questions that are related to instructors' practices in their reading and writing classes. Section 3 consisted of eight Likert-scale questions that explore the extent of instructors' agreement with their practices in their reading and writing classes. Finally, section four investigates instructors' opinion regarding the implementation of balanced reading and writing instruction.

After that, the questionnaire was piloted with three instructors who were similar to the target sample. The internal consistency has been calculated using SPSS after analyzing the data collected from the piloting group. Accordingly, it has been found that the scale of instructors' attitude is reliable as Cronbach Alpha is ($\alpha = 0.912$). The latest version of the instructors' questionnaire included 31 items that correspond to the first research question.

4.5.6.1.2 Questionnaire administration

Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009) indicated that the quality of participants' responses is significantly affected by the procedures of questionnaire administration. Accordingly, the following procedures were considered to ensure having feasible data: to control the data collection procedure, the researcher herself contacted each instructor to answer the questionnaire. In addition, the instructors were given oral and written information about the purpose of the study and their role. It has been mentioned that the current study will not be possible without instructors' cooperation and accordingly, confidentiality and anonymity have been ensured in addition to assuring that their participation is voluntary. The participants took from 22 to 27 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

4.5.6.2 Collection of qualitative data

4.5.6.2.1 Procedures of semi-structured interviews

The aim of the interviews was to give the instructors an opportunity to elaborate more about the issues they might face before, during and after implementing a balance in teaching reading and writing. Woolfolk and Shaughnessy' guidelines (2004) have been considered in order to create the questions of the interview. Interview questions were piloted with two instructors before using them in the actual interviews in order to have an idea about the time needed and to modify any irrelevant question. For instance, one question was deleted as it would lead to a biased response and some questions were canceled as they were already answered during the interview. Consequently, instructors' interviews were more manageable and deep with the use of few items.

4.5.6.2.2 Procedures of achievement tests

The procedures below were followed before, during, and after conducting the achievement tests: the achievement tests' theoretical framework has been prepared using relevant literature. Then, the researcher studied the literature that is related to a balanced instruction in general and its implementation in reading and writing classes in particular. After that, the list of the writing skills that will be under investigation has been prepared and modified

according to referees' feedback. Then, the achievement tests were designed after analyzing the content of the determined writing skills that were taught in Foundation Program. To ensure tests' statistical validity, the researcher consulted a group of experienced people in English language pedagogy. Besides, the initial draft of a balanced instruction program has been implemented in the pilot study to find out any obstacles that might be faced during the actual implementation of a balanced program.

The implementation of a balanced instruction program took place at the beginning of March and lasted for one month. At the start, the researcher applied the pre-test on both groups (intervention and control) to diagnose students' pre-knowledge of the determined writing skills to be recorded, interpreted, and analyzed. The implementation of a balanced instruction program on the intervention group was the next step. The traditional reading and writing teaching methods were used with the control group. After one month, the post-test was applied with both groups to understand the impact of implementing a balanced instruction on learners' essay writing performance. At the end, the results of the post-test have been recorded, interpreted and analyzed.

4.5.7 Data analysis

The management of the collected data was in light of the following procedures: In the beginning, the researcher's handwritten notes and reflection were entered into a Word document. The notes and the transcriptions of the interviews also have been entered in a Word document. The researcher used pseudonyms to ensure participants anonymity. All qualitative data were entered into Nvivo 11 (a software tool used to analyze research qualitative data), which allowed easy access to the data and accelerated the analysis process.

4.5.7.1 Qualitative data analysis

Ezzy (2013) suggests that various possible approaches could be used to analyze qualitative data as there are no specific procedures that can be followed in this regard. Due to the exploratory descriptive nature of the current research questions and according to Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012), results of the semi-structured interviews and content analysis of the achievement tests documents have been analyzed qualitatively.

The researcher has implemented the thematic analysis stages suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) in order to analyze the qualitative data. Those stages were used for becoming familiar with the data, creating codes, identifying and reviewing the themes, producing definitions and names for these themes, and finally presenting the results.

First, the researcher has read the achievement tests documents to become more familiar with the data. Then, she codified the themes that are relevant to literature and the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ritchie et al., 2014). The data of the achievement tests have been analyzed in two steps. Firstly, the analysis has comprised of manual coding of the data available. The main themes have been selected and been included in the interview questions.

Secondly, the data analysis has been conducted after collecting all qualitative data. This step enabled the researcher to create digital codes and categorize it through the creation of nodes using Nvivo 11. The aim of the study has been considered throughout the coding process. In order to create single and multiple codes, the texts have been extracted. In this step the coding was descriptive. This was done in order to identify and develop themes that have been interpreted at a later stage of the analysis.

4.5.7.2 Quantitative data analysis

The researcher has prepared the questionnaire data for statistical analysis by coding the questionnaire items and converting them into numerical form. The instructors and their level of study have been pointed up. Then, the participants have been selected using the codes included in their contact details. After that, the data collected from the questionnaire have been computed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The operations of the analysis has included reliability and descriptive statistics. The discrepancies in the responses of the participants have been calculated. In order to ease the reporting of the data, descriptive statistics have been computed.

4.5.7.3 Considerations of research's quality

Since in the current research a mixed methods approach has been adopted, this could lead to having various issues regarding the reliability and validity of quantitative and qualitative data. To collect quantitative data, the researcher has used Cronbach Alpha to ensure the

reliability of the research instrument. Cronbach Alpha is a method used to find out the internal consistency between all of the questionnaire's items. The result of Cronbach Alpha was 0.912, which indicates that the used instrument is reliable (check table (11)).

In addition, the validity construction of the questionnaire has been ensured. Using multiple measures for one construct has enhanced the construction of current research validity (Terrell, 2012). For instance, reading issues were measured using nine items, while issues related to writing were measured using 14 items. Validity construction is linked to the participants of a study. It gives an indication about participants' ability to understand the research instrument to measure what the researcher intends to measure (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009). This step is important as leads the participants to think seriously about their participation in the study. Construct validity was investigated when the pilot study was conducted. At this stage, the researcher has revised the questionnaire, piloted it, and analyzed its initial results before using it with the actual sample. Moreover, the validity of a research instrument could be assured by carefully selecting study participants (Almalki, 2016). In the current study, the researcher tried to select the participants who were as representative as possible to the intended research population.

The differences between ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin both quantitative and qualitative approaches have created a consensus between education researchers who argue that qualitative research cannot be judged according to the same quality criteria as quantitative research (Guetterman, Fetters, & Creswell, 2015; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). In general, the validity of qualitative data could be ensured by collecting in depth, honest and rich data, study participants, triangulations of study instruments, and researcher's objectivity (Tashakkori, Johnson, & Teddlie, 2020). Regarding researcher's objectivity, the researcher agrees with Bergin (2018) view when he affirmed the point that as researchers are part of the domain they are researching in, they cannot be totally objective. She also agrees with Bryman (2007) when he said that the subjectivity of the researcher and the participants make it impossible for a study to be valid 100% as it contributes to a degree of bias. Accordingly, Tariq and Woodman (2013) pointed out that validity should be measured as a degree rather than as unbound state. In the current study, the researcher has adopted the quality criteria presented by Bryman, Becker, and Sempik (2008) for the qualitative part. Bryman, Becker, and Sempik

(2008) have suggested the term “trustworthiness” of a study as a synonym of research validity, which is based on four aspects: credibility, reliability, transferability, and objectivity.

Hilligoss and Rieh (2008) have defined credibility as the value of truth of research, which can be reached by the triangulation of research methodology and researcher’s long-term engagement in the field. Accordingly, the researcher had more than 6 years of experience teaching in higher education and 12-year experience teaching in the school system in the UAE. Throughout her engagement in the educational field and according to her observation of the weak English proficiency of Foundation Program’s students, she had the curiosity to investigate the reasons behind that weakness. Consequently, the researcher triangulated the instruments used in data collection in order to improve the current study’s credibility. She used instructor’s questionnaire, instructor’s interviews, and achievement tests. The researcher believes that the research design, the systematic description of the data collection method procedures, and data analysis have enhanced the truth-value of the current study.

For Coghlan and Brydon-Miller (2014, p. 46), the transferability of a research finding “is the extent to which it can be applied in other contexts and studies. It is thus equivalent to or a replacement for the terms generalizability and external validity.” Accordingly, the researcher supports Silverman (2020) in his belief that even though the nature and diversity of phenomena of qualitative research are not in relation to their prevalence, its results could be generalized if these two aspects were considered. However, Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2020) assert that in research, the researcher’s role is not to generalize his/her results, but it is a matter of providing a detailed description of the research context and participants to enable others to judge the study's transferability. Therefore, the researcher has provided a detailed description of the study setting and participants.

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), the researcher can establish dependability and confirmability by documenting the design of the study, the methods used to collect the data, and the data analysis. In the current study, the researcher has achieved this by providing elaborate details about the participants, the setting, the instruments used to collect the data, data procedures, and data analysis. Moreover, the adoption of the mixed methods approach has developed the study’s internal validity as it offered a number of integral means of legitimized results (Anney, 2014) that allowed the researcher to examine the collected data employing two research perspectives.

4.5.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical principles have to be accounted for in all research studies within the social sciences (Wellington, 2015).

To begin with, the research purpose has been mentioned in the introduction of the instructor's questionnaire. Instructors who participated in the questionnaire and the interviews have been informed that the researcher will anonymize all of their responses. Their names will not be mentioned to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. In addition, they were affirmed that their participation in the survey and the interviews is completely voluntary and no personally identifiable information will be associated with their responses to any data reports.

Students who participated in the intervention and the achievement tests have been given a written consent form (Appendix 3), in which the researcher states the purpose of the study, and the procedures involved. In addition, the researcher explained that their participation is voluntary, which means they can withdraw at any time. The participants have been informed that the researcher will anonymize all of their responses and their names will not be mentioned to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. The students have been familiarized with the information which clarifies that the test will not affect their grades in any way, and they have the right to withdraw from the experiment at any time to minimize harm, especially for those who would experience stress during the test.

A permission letter has been obtained from BUID for conducting the research in the target institution. In addition to another permission letter from the targeted institution has been obtained before starting the survey, the interviews, and the intervention.

Chapter 5: Study Results and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of balancing reading and writing instruction in Foundation Program, and how that would affect learners' essay writing skills in higher education institutions in the UAE. In addition, it investigates the mean differences of the achievement tests between the experimental group and the control group. Moreover, this chapter summarizes the main study variables and present statistical analysis technic that are used to answer the research questions.

To have this purpose achieved, a questionnaire has been created to investigate the instructors' attitudes regarding a balance in teaching reading and writing and to identify their opinions about using a balanced technique in teaching these two skills. Then, interviews have been conducted with a number of those teachers to give them a chance to elaborate more about reading and writing balanced instruction. In addition, an achievement test has been designed to decide whether a balanced reading and writing instruction program has an influence on students' writing performance or not.

This chapter includes the analysis of both quantitative data of the questionnaire and the achievement tests and qualitative data of the instructors' interviews. The Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the quantitative data, while the interpretation technique has been used to analyze the qualitative data.

5.2 Quantitative data

5.2.1 Participants' demographic characteristics

This section has been designed to find out any potential connections between instructors' background and their responses to the other sections. This study included 35 teachers. The vast majority of them are having a Master degree 29 (82.9%), and working as instructors 32 (91.4%). Moreover, 11 (31.4%) are having more than 20-year experience in higher education. Finally,

the majority of those teachers teach level B1 students. The detail of participants' demographic information is summarized in Table (12).

Table 12: Sample Demographic Characteristics (N = 35).

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Educational Level		
- Master Degree	29	82.9
- PhD Degree	6	17.1
Job Title		
- Lecturer	3	8.6
- Instructor	32	91.4
Years of experience in higher education		
- 1-5 years	4	11.4
- 6-10 years	7	19.4
- 11-15	10	27.8
- 16-20 years	4	11.1
- More than 20 years	11	30.6
Students' level in English language		
- A2	4	11.4
- B1	31	88.6
- B2	0	0

5.2.2 Reading data profile

Regarding reading data profile, approximately half of the sample 17 (48.6%) teach reading skills with another skill. This indicates that instructors have a positive attitude towards the benefits of combining English language skills that would lead to creating a kind of balance

in teaching those skills. Additionally, they use different proportions of different technics however, 60% of responses were “*I use all mentioned technics*”, that involve independent work, having partial assistance from the teacher, and being fully dependent on the teacher. The poor comprehension skills were remarkably reported in (91.4%) of the responses. This result probably comes from the fact that interpreting and analyzing the author’s points of view are considerably improved reading skills. Moreover, 14 (40.0%) of the instructors follow lesson plan when teaching reading skills. This result indicates that although instructors are able to create various activities to establish the notion that the English language is a whole system, the majority of them do not do that. Approximately, more than half of the sample reported that the methods they use in teaching reading *sometimes* attract learners’ attention.

Similarly, the vast majority of the teachers 31 (88.5%) have agreed that the learners should be given reading texts to be done as homework. This signifies the point that this practice has a positive effect on learners’ reading abilities. Moreover, 12 (34.3%) teachers out of 35 said that “*sometimes and often encourage my students to critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text*”. Only 13 (37.1%) of the participants often encourage their learners to go back and forth in the reading text to find relationship among the ideas in it. These results show that the majority of the instructors do not focus on the necessary techniques that would enhance learners’ performance in both reading and writing skills. Finally, 12 (34.3%) of the instructors always encourage their students to use reference materials such as dictionaries to help their students to better understand what they read. This indicates that although the resources are available, the majority of the instructors do not encourage their students to use it. The detail of reading data profile is shown in Table (13).

Table 13: Reading data profile.

Questionnaire Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Weekly number of reading classes per CRN		
- 1-2 classes	15	42.9
- 3-4 classes	3	8.6
- 5 classes	0	0.0
- Reading classes are usually mixed with another skill	17	48.6
Reading teaching technique *		
- Students work independently	11	31.4
- Students have partial assistance from the teacher	9	25.7
- Students are fully dependent on the teacher	1	2.9
- I use all of the above techniques	21	60.0
Students' reading problems *		
- Poor comprehension skills.	32	91.4
- Issues with Decoding.	28	80.0
- Learning disability.	6	17.1
Do you follow a lesson plan for teaching reading?		
- Yes	14	40.0
- No	11	31.4
- Sometimes	10	28.6
Does the method you use in teaching reading attract your students' attention?		

- Yes	13	37.1
- No	2	5.7
- Sometimes	20	57.1
Students should be assigned some reading texts to be done as a homework.		
- Strongly agree + Agree	31	88.5
- Strongly disagree + Disagree	2	5.7
- Neutral	2	5.7
I encourage my students to critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.		
- Never	0	0.0
- Occasionally	3	8.6
- Sometimes	12	34.3
- Often	12	34.3
- Always	8	22.9
I encourage my students to go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.		
- Never	1	2.9
- Occasionally	7	20.0
- Sometimes	7	20.0
- Often	13	37.1
- Always	7	20.0
I encourage my students to use reference materials such as dictionaries to help them understand what they read.		
- Never	0	0.0

- Occasionally	3	8.6
- Sometimes	9	25.7
- Often	11	31.4
- Always	12	34.3

(*) The frequency calculated based on participants' responses.

5.2.3 Writing data profile

In terms of writing profile, approximately 12 (34.3%) instructors give from 3 to 4 writing classes a week per CRN. This result evokes the point that giving this number of writing classes would not be an indication that these classes are effective. In addition, more than half of the responses 18 (51.4%) reported that they used all the mentioned teaching technics in their writing classes. This could involve working independently, providing a template, giving different types of writing activities, and brainstorming the topic. Moreover, 22 (62.9%) of the teachers thought that giving an equal attention to reading and writing skills classes would affect learners' writing skills. This indicates that instructors have a positive attitude towards balanced reading and writing instruction.

Surprisingly, grammar skills and sentence structure were the most common writing problems (85.7%). In addition, the students of (68.6%) of the instructors do not have appropriate knowledge of academic writing skills. This means that the majority of the instructors are aware of their students' strengths and weaknesses. The students of more than half of the sample 20 (57.1%) prefer to work individually in writing classes, which signifies the point that having a variety of writing activities would help weak writers improve their essay production. Moreover, 17 (48.6%) of the instructors follow a rubric when grading their students' essays, and 14 (40.0%) follow a lesson plan when teaching writing. This suggests that it is not important for the majority of the instructors to variate writing teaching methods. The methods of teaching writing skills used by 18 (51.4%) teachers *sometimes* attract learners' attention. This leads to assume that their students are unable to produce good essays because they are not enough motivated. For (88.6%) of the instructors, learners' awareness of text organization and their attention to mechanic and punctuation were the most aspects that would indicate the students' improvement in writing

skills. In addition, 94.3% of the teachers reported that teachers' feedback during the writing process would help the learner enhance their writing skills. Depending on this result, it would be better to have written feedback as students can keep it as a reference.

The vast majority of the instructors, 28 (80.0%) have agreed that the learners should be given writing exercises as homework. This signifies the point that this practice has an impact on learners' writing abilities. Only 16 (45.7%) of the participants *often* encourage their students to reflect on important information in the reading text. In addition, only 12 (34.3%) of the instructors *sometimes* encourage their students to paraphrase to better understand what they read. Instructors' responses imply that they are less positive towards the techniques that have an effect on learners' writing performance. Finally, the vast majority of the instructors 31 (88.6%) have agreed that they know their learners' strengths and weaknesses. This result arises a question that is why do not teachers prepare activities, create plans, or follow a technic that meet learners' needs to enable them enhance their English language skills in general and reading and writing in particular. The detailed writing data profile is presented in Table (14).

Table 14: Writing data profile

Questionnaire Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Weekly number of writing classes per CRN		
- 1-2 classes	11	31.4
- 3-4 classes	12	34.3
- 5 classes	1	2.9
- Writing classes are usually mixed with another skill	11	31.4
Writing teaching technique *		
- Students work independently	9	25.7
- The students are given different types of writing activities.	9	25.7
- I use writing based on template technique.	11	31.4
- I use join writing in a group technique.	3	8.6
- I discuss the prompt with students as a kind of brainstorming, prepare a video that is related to the topic, make sure the students understand the prompt, and give feedback when they finish writing.	11	31.4
- I use all of the above techniques.	18	51.4
Do you think giving equal attention to reading and writing classes would affect students' writing skills?		
- Yes	22	62.9
- No	10	28.6
- Maybe	3	8.5

Students' writing problems *		
- Appropriate knowledge of academic writing skills.	24	68.6
- Grammar skills.	30	85.7
- Motivation problems.	17	48.6
- Interest in the topic.	13	37.1
- Language of instruction (English).	16	45.7
- Sentence structure.	30	85.7
In writing classes, how do your students prefer to work?		
- Individually	20	57.1
- In groups	9	25.7
- Pair work	6	17.1
Do you follow a rubric when you grade your students' essays?		
- Yes	17	48.6
- No	6	17.1
- Sometimes	12	34.3
Do you follow a lesson plan for teaching writing?		
- Yes	14	40.0
- No	9	25.7
- Sometimes	12	34.3
Does the method you use in teaching writing attract your students' attention?		
- Yes	16	45.7

- No	1	2.9
- Sometimes	18	51.4
How can you perceive your students' improvement in writing skills? *		
- Control over grammar.	30	85.7
- Appropriate use of vocabulary.	26	74.3
- Awareness of text organization.	31	88.6
- Clarity in the use of connectors.	27	77.1
- Attention to mechanics and punctuation.	31	88.6
The writing process that may have helped your students improve their writing skills in English. *		
- Exposure to models of good writing.	32	91.4
- Guidance from the teacher.	31	88.6
- Feedback from the teacher.	33	94.3
- Feedback from classmates.	13	37.1
Students should be given writing exercises as homework.		
- Neural	5	14.3
- Agree + Strongly agree	28	80.0
- Disagree + Strongly agree	2	5.7
I encourage my students to reflect on important information in the reading texts.		
- Never	1	2.9
- Occasionally	1	2.9
- Sometimes	6	17.1

- Often	16	45.7
- Always	11	31.4
I encourage my students to paraphrase to better understand what they read.		
- Never	5	14.2
- Occasionally	8	22.9
- Sometimes	12	34.3
- Often	8	22.9
- Always	2	5.7
I know my students' strength and weakness		
- Strongly Agree + agree	31	88.6
- Strongly disagree + Disagree	4	11.4
- Neutral	0	0.0

(*) The frequency calculated based on participants' responses.

5.2.4 Achievement Tests Results:

To test if there is a statistical significant mean differences between intervention and control groups on the post-test score after controlling their pretest score as a covariate, a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted. This has been done after verifying the homogeneity of regression slope and ensure that it was not violated ($F=2.317$, $p=0.137$). The results in Table (15) revealed that there was a statistical significant mean differences between the two groups ($F=129.406$, $p\leq 0.001$, $\eta^2=0.778$). On other words, the intervention group has significant higher mean (30.95 ± 5.81) than the control group (13.62 ± 3.24). It has been found that the adjusted mean for intervention group and control group were (30.70 and 13.87) respectively. This indicates that a balanced reading and writing instruction program has

enhanced students' achievement scores in the intervention group more than the control group. Besides, the eta squared for the effect size ($\eta^2=0.778$) which indicated that 77.8% of variation in posttest score has been explained by the groups and the eta squared was higher than value of 0.14. This has been determined by (Cohen, 1988) who implied that a balanced reading and writing instruction program had a large effect on students' achievement test scores.

In addition, Mc Guigan's Ratio for program effectiveness was calculated for intervention group based on the equation (pretest mean - posttest mean / total score - pretest mean). Accordingly pretest mean= 13.70, posttest mean = 30.95, total score = 40, Mc Guigan's Ratio = 0.66. Accordingly, the calculated Gain Ratio exceeded threshold point (0.6) that is determined by Mc Guigan's which implies that a balanced reading and writing instruction has an effective impact on students' achievement test scores.

Table 15: The results of ANCOVA between two groups on achievement posttest score

Groups	N	Mean $\pm$ SD	Adjusted Mean	F value	Sig	η^2
Intervention	20	30.95 $\pm$ 5.81	30.70	129.406	≤ 0.001	0.778
Control	20	13.62 $\pm$ 3.24	13.87			

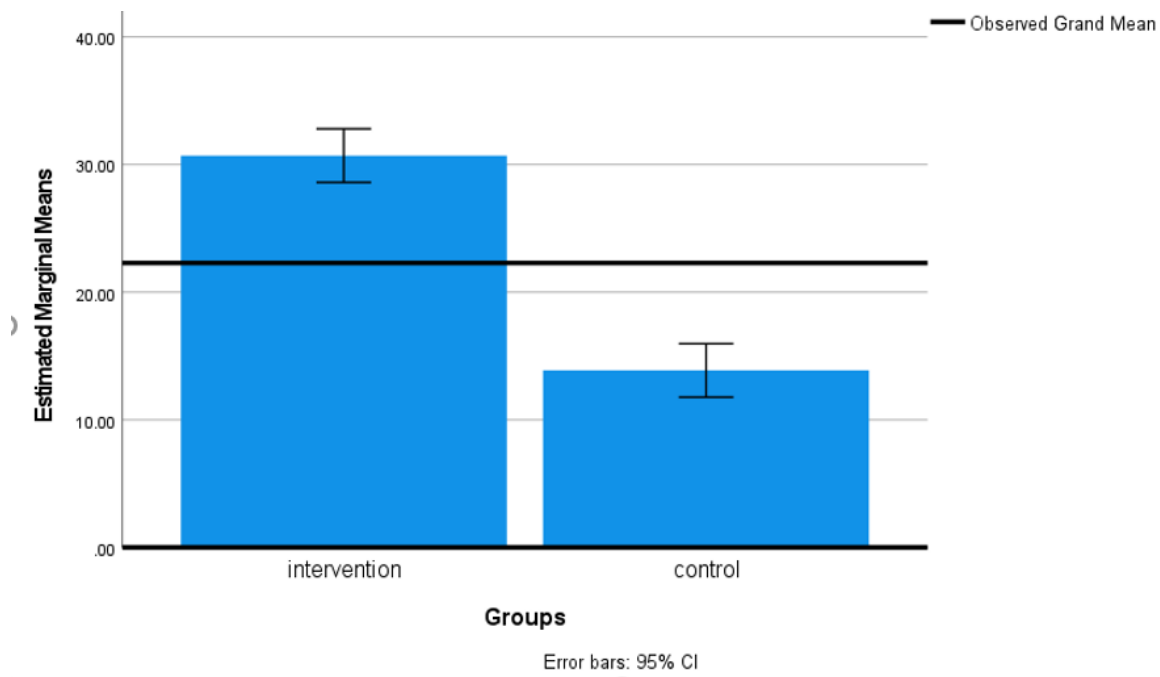


Figure 7: Estimated marginal means of post-test score

5.3 Qualitative data

5.3.1 Instructors' questionnaire

The three open-ended questions aim to find out the instructors' perceptions regarding their practices in their reading and writing classes that would affect learners' writing performance. The answers have provided a number of points that are:

- Instructors over focus on grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. They neglect style and writing conventions.
- Instructors are indifferent to what students read. For them learners just need to read. In their opinion, *"reading in students' native language will assist with their writing."*
- Instructors focus on having their learners to get the words out by doing different activities such as games. Those games aim to increase learners' vocabulary bank, but it does not teach them how to use those words in a context.

- Instructors look for the criteria in the writing rubric and if they cannot see most of the points in the essay, it will not pass.
- Lack of giving effective feedback.
- Limited number of instructors refer to reading strategies during writing tasks.
- Instructors have attributed students' weakness in writing skills to the problem that the effect on their final grade is the only aspect that motivates them.

5.3.2 Achievement tests

The analysis of the posttest writing scores showed remarkable development in learners' writing ability. The scores of the pretest suggested that not all participants were meeting the writing standards, while posttest scores indicated that 18 of the 20 learners were matching the writing standards. Having more than 15 students improving the range of their writing performance from the low academic level to the standard performance level is another indicator of the intervention model success.

Moreover, the analysis of the posttest data has revealed that one student stayed in the same performance level as she did before the intervention. The scores of the majority of students have been improved seven to ten points, but in some cases, learners' scores were insufficient to elevate their performance to the next higher stage. It can be said that the intervention strategies had the minimal effect on this student.

After the intervention, it was clear that learners were able to demonstrate confined development in different writing skills such as writing sufficient number of words, generating ideas, abide by the topic, vocabulary use, sentence structure, essay organization, and grammar rules. Twelve of the students' essays gave evidence that learners have made main modifications in the posttest prompt. On the other hand, none of the students has tried to change in the pretest task. Thirteen students have revised their compositions in their posttest, while only four class members substituted, deleted, and added their papers during the pretest. Two students were able to share their essays with others before the intervention, while more

than half of the participants were willing to share their writing products during and after the intervention.

The data generated from the achievement tests revealed that the combined teaching method used in teaching writing skills and students' performance scores have positive correlation. As previously mentioned, learners were able to meet the writing standards when they utilized the whole writing process steps. The student who has not reached the required level has used some of the steps followed in the writing process. Furthermore, the intervention data could indicate that approximately 83% of the students were unable to meet the writing standards of the Foundation Program due to having difficulties in transferring their skills to actual writing activities.

5.3.3 Instructors' interviews

The interviews' results demonstrate similarities and disagreement in the attitude of Foundation Program instructors regarding a balance in teaching reading and writing. Some common thoughts and contrasting opinions the instructors shared will be reported in the section below.

5.3.3.1 Common attitude

A fairly large number of the instructors have agreed on some points that generally talk about the same ideas, especially the effectiveness of a balance in reading and writing instruction and its impact on students' writing performance. In addition to the need for instructors to get training sessions that help them apply this strategy in their reading and writing classes.

Five of the seven instructors have agreed that a balance in teaching reading and writing could be beneficial for their students. Instructor1 has supported a balance in reading and writing teaching methods by clarifying how this would enhance students' writing skills:

"I believe that reading helps our students' development in critical thinking skills and can inspire some new ideas on a topic. In addition, reading exposes the students to a variety of writing styles, allows them to study/see grammar in context. Finally, yet importantly, when

students are interested in reading, they usually have a better vocabulary repertoire, which they can subsequently embed into their writing.”

Then, he added: *“Most reading skills can help indirectly including skimming for gist, scanning, even referencing.”* For him *“predicting, visualizing, inferencing, questioning, monitoring and summarizing”* Are the reading skills that could improve learners’ writing performance.

Instructor 2 thinks balancing reading and writing teaching methods benefits her learners by *“understanding main ideas and paragraph structure.”* In addition, it would help the learners *“looking at the structure and connectors to figure out what is happening.”* In her opinion *“reading comprehension, sentence construction and cohesion”* the most reading skills that could help improving students' writing skills, as *“making inferences requires attention to details in a paragraph. Inferencing and pronoun referencing can both help with writing paragraphs in acceptable English and with good supporting details.”*

For instructor 3, balanced read and writing instruction helps learners see the English language as one system, which cannot be separated:

“Understanding the sentence form and word order, use of connectors, organization, critical thinking/analyzing, and understanding structure of a text are the system of the language that work together. You as a teacher cannot teach them separately. Our learners can improve their writing skills by combining all of these aspects together in their writing tasks to produce good essays.”

This means that it would be a great opportunity for Foundation Program students to deal with English language as a full system not as separate skills.

Instructor 4 asserted the idea of a balance in reading and writing teaching and pointed that reading skills assist learners *“understanding ideas and how they're connected, keeping an eye on how sentences are written, vocabulary in context, and pronouns.”* In her opinion, reading skills give the students a chance to *“identify text organization, notice activities related to grammar, coherence and cohesion, and vocabulary.”*

This instructor pointed: *“I tell my students I don't really care what they read, but they just need to read. Even reading in their native language will assist with their writing.”* For her, the activities of reading are more than comprehensive to improve learners’ writing competency, regardless of whether they read in English or in their mother tongue.

Instructor 5 mentioned that reading skill can help the students improve their writing competency as it *“expands vocabulary, helps expose students to different writing styles, reading for detail allows students to see grammar use in context.”* Those instructors’ opinions support the hypothesis that says balancing reading and writing teaching methods would enhance learners’ writing performance.

All five instructors have agreed upon an important issue, that is Foundation Program’s teachers need to be trained in giving classes based on balanced reading and writing teaching. Instructor 4 stated:

“I think that teachers are required to have some PD (Professional Development) courses to understand what balanced reading and writing instruction means and how it can be applied in the class. Is it a book that they have to use? It is important to clarify what “balanced teaching” means. Actually, more information should be given, and balanced teaching has to be clearly explained. The PD sessions should be given by experts who would share their experience and give examples about whether it was good or bad.”

Instructor 2 has raised the issue of true balanced instruction. In her opinion, having people who have knowledge in this area is important to illustrate the meaning of balanced teaching method in lecturers’ minds.

Two instructors have shared some thoughts about possible procedures to train Foundation Program’s teachers. Instructor 5 suggested that *“we should talk to teachers before starting the training sessions as we might get some feedback from them. For instance, we can hold some workshops and ask them why they need this balance in their classes and why they do not need it. We might get some advice or suggestions from them.”* In this context, instructor 5 has emphasized the necessity of teachers regarding their understanding,

their attitudes, and their considerations for any possible modification concerning balanced skills.

Instructor 3 has underscored the specific requirement of novice trainees when suggesting the procedures that should be considered to prepare them for balanced reading and writing teaching methods. He said:

“I cannot ensure that all Foundation Program’s teachers are aware of the meaning of balanced or separate teaching methods as we have lots of novice teachers in the program. They are new here and they see only separate skills. I am not quite sure whether they are familiar with balanced instruction. Of course, I am not out of this as when I started working here, it was directly after getting my master’s degree. At that time, I had no idea about balanced instruction.”

Instructor 5 believes that new teachers, in particular, are not ready, as they are required to be trained in balanced teaching methods. She stated:

“We are teaching English language skills separately for five years and now new teachers are required to follow balanced reading and writing instruction, I do not think they are ready. In addition to that, teaching writing is difficult especially for beginners. They will be confused when teaching it with other skills.”

For instructor 5, lack of experience could further sophisticate the novice teachers’ efforts to use a balanced curriculum as they have limited experience even in teaching English language skills separately.

Instructor 1 has some worries regarding balanced reading and writing teaching methods. He demonstrated the steps of balanced reading and writing instruction as one skill in which the teachers should have agreement on the main issues that they face. He suggested *“Foundation Program’s teachers should collaboratively work together to clarify the essential points such as the sections that they would take from reading and writing material in a balanced curriculum.”* He questioned whether a balance could be formed without the program’s instructors’ acceptance on some essential issues. In his opinion, if these steps could not be formed, a balance in reading and writing instruction would be more difficult

than expected. In addition, He agreed with other instructors who asserted the need for training sessions by saying:

“I personally do not have so much opinion, as we have not experienced this kind of balance previously, but I would ensure that program’s instructors should be prepared for both the theoretical and practical aspects.”

This instructor explained his own lack of experience with balanced reading and writing instruction when he started teaching in higher education institutions and clarified why the program’s teachers need a trainer. When he was asked if he is ready to give such training sessions, he said: *“an expert is better.”* In such response, he confesses that even experienced teachers might not have enough knowledge about balanced reading and writing teaching methods to run PD sessions about the topic.

Instructor 3 has agreed on the necessity of teachers’ preparation. In addition, he talked about his lack of experience in balanced reading and writing instruction. He stated:

“Big number of instructors have no idea about how to balance reading and writing teaching. Personally, I have taught reading and writing as separate skills for seven years. To be honest, I feel I am not familiar with how to apply balanced instruction when teaching reading and writing. On other word, I cannot imagine myself doing that in my class. I think to do this I have to work hard.”

Therefore, he approved the idea of instructors’ training sessions to adopt balanced reading and writing instruction in Foundation Program syllabus. Moreover, He obligated the point that this training firstly has to be given for novice teachers. He said: *“they have to start with new teachers because they are inexperienced in this topic. They absolutely need such PD.”*

Like other instructors, he recommended knowledgeable people to lead the teachers through their training sessions. He emphasized novice teachers’ lack of experience in implementing balanced reading and writing teaching methods:

“In fact, this kind of PD sessions should be given by experts and also, I think there is a need for those experienced people to do the needed development in the program curriculum. We need to modify the program syllabus and there should be a person who understands how to balance reading and writing instruction and how to change our curriculum for this balance. Therefore, we need an experienced leader, as none of us here is knowledgeable. It is something new for us because of that we are required to know more about it.”

Instructor 3 strongly emphasized the issues of teachers’ training. He thinks that all program teachers are required to be trained in balanced teaching methods with the assistance of experts. In addition, similar to the others, instructor 3 considered having an expert to lead the training sessions is essential; however, he did not consider himself having enough experience to guide those PD sessions.

Obviously, all instructors have an agreement on the parts of a balanced reading and writing teaching methods’ aspects. In general, they think their learners would benefit from that balance, but they believe that program’s instructors need to have theoretical and practical information and knowledge about such balance.

5.3.3.1 Opposing attitudes

Some of the interviewed instructors expressed contrasting perspectives regarding balanced reading and writing instruction. The Foundation Program’s teachers have conflicted concerns about their confidence with the current separated curriculum. Two instructors clearly have indicated their preference with the present curricular separation.

Instructor 6 has expressed his acceptance for balanced reading and writing teaching methods and his dissatisfaction with the separation in the current curriculum by saying:

“In fact, I am unhappy with teaching reading and writing separately because when we do that our students will think that English language is not one system. Actually, as teachers, we cannot transfer the knowledge from one skill to another as all skills have their own features. This is the major problem we face in our classes. Additionally, we have some problems in our syllabuses’ design because they are not matching. For instance, the writing

syllabus is being prepared according to teachers' beliefs and thoughts, but then, we found some mismatching between the other language skills. Accordingly, the skill we teach in reading might not be effective in writing, which leads to actual problems."

Instructor 7 has agreed with balanced reading and writing teaching methods in one condition that is discarding academic writing from the writing syllabus. He was unsatisfied with the present syllabus, but he focused his dissatisfaction on the syllabi academic material. He was unhappy with writing skills and wanted to modify the writing material used in the classes. He stated:

"Students in Foundation Program learn basic English skills. Because of that, we are supposed to teach them the necessary skills needed in their major on in their entire life. I believe that academic writing is not important for them. It would be better to learn non-academic and free writing as it would be difficult for them to learn academic writing skills in depth as they are unable to deal with those skills and their writing essays could be very limited when teaching these things. In my opinion, writing material should be changed."

He also supported balanced reading and writing teaching methods. Therefore, he believes that this balance can be achievable if academic writing has been canceled: *"A balance in reading and writing teaching would be possible if the material of writing skills has been changed."* He justified his judgement by explaining that it is not important for the learners to learn academic English at this stage. For him, General English is more suitable for them to be able to proceed in their academic majors and this is what they need for their careers in future. On the other hand, this is not the case in the major stage as the learners are required to write research papers and they have many assignments that necessitate having adequate writing skills before starting their degree courses. Since college students have not been taught how to write in an academic context, they are requested to learn that in the Foundation Program. Because of that, students in Foundation Program are taught academic skills rather than general ones to be prepared for their majors' courses. In his opinion, the process of balancing reading and writing teaching could make the situation more complicated if academic skills have been taught as reading texts include academic context that will have the learners to produce academic essays.

Instructor 6 has supported the concept of not teaching academic writing. He claimed:

“Defining our objectives and goals is the Foundation Program major problem. In my opinion, we are not supposed to give much academic skills if our goal is to teach general English skills. If this is the case, we have to pay attention to non-academic material, as we do not teach English language major here. I believe that writing syllabus in Foundation Program is not easy. Our learners sometimes are fed up with essay writing, types of essays, and other formal things, which is for us very problematic. To create a kind of awareness regarding writing, we have to focus on how to enable our students to express themselves in their writing products. This would happen by working on non-academic skills.”

For both instructors, using balanced reading and writing teaching will be problematic when teaching academic writing. They suggested that it would be difficult for Foundation Program students to show progress in academic writing as this usually happens within a very limited time. If they applied balanced reading and writing teaching in their classes, it would be even more difficult for their learners to produce acceptable essays.

Instructor 4 thinks that in general the idea of balanced reading and writing instruction has an acceptance among Foundation Program’s teachers when stated *“as far as I know, our team has positive attitude towards a balance in teaching reading and writing.”* According to her, instructors are very positive towards balanced reading and writing instruction because they are unsatisfied with writing material in the syllabus. Like her, teachers accepted the use of this balance as it could be a chance to discard academic writing. She claimed: *“In general, the team feels positive because they think that academic writing is not what Foundation Program students need.”*

On other words, she wanted to say that the teachers, similar to her, are unhappy with academic writing teaching. They favor the shift that would happen when applying balanced instruction as they assume that there is no need to teach academic writing in a balanced curriculum.

Dissimilarly, both instructor 2 and instructor 6 believe that Foundation Program's teachers have another attitude regarding teaching English language although the basics are the same. For those, it is better to teach reading and writing separately. Instructor 6 suggested:

"In the Foundation Program, syllabuses are not alike because of that we teach reading and writing separately. We try to teach all academic writing skills in our writing classes and for reading, we do the same. I can say that the majority of the topics approximately are the same. You will find different points of view regarding teaching reading and writing. For me, I am happy with the separation in teaching reading and writing. I do not have any problem with that."

On the other hand, this instructor expressed some contradicted ideas when he said: *"a balance in teaching reading and writing could be effective for enhancing students' performance in writing skills."* Then he added: *"this balance might make students think of English language as one system, which would not be used separately, may be."* At the beginning, he showed preference for teaching reading and writing as separate skills, but then, he confessed that a balance in teaching these two skills could assist learners deal with English language as one system.

Instructor 7 is fully satisfied with the present separation of teaching reading and writing skills. He stated: *"We are completely pleased with the curriculum we have."* He explained his satisfaction by specifying his learners: *"I received positive feedback from my class. They like the book I use, and they like the activities we do in class. They believe that what we do in the class is very useful for them."* He also clarified some sides of the separate syllabus that pleases him by claiming:

"Last semester, I exposed them to a large number of vocabularies, and during the second semester, I gave them some strategies for reading skills that would help them during reading time. I also taught them some needed reading skills such as identifying the main ideas in the reading passages, recognize the supporting details in the paragraph, how the passages are closed. In this semester, I try to teach them some skills to improve their critical thinking skills that the majority of students lack."

He declared that he prepares his students for reading lessons by teaching them the skills that are needed for that class. He engages his learners in effective activities that are beneficial to get general English language acquisition. Accordingly, he expressed his full pleasure with the present syllabus. Thus, his resistance for a balance in teaching reading and writing is due to the fact that he thinks it is nearly impossible to adopt such balance: *“It is something new for us, so I think it will be difficult for us. I mean, it will be out of our limitations, as we know nothing about it. So, I am not sure how we are going to apply it.”*

In addition, he is against any other teaching techniques that would be used in class. Amid his interview, the searcher has suggested some strategies to be used in reading and writing classes. One of them was to have students put themselves in another person’s shoes and write an essay describing how they feel from the perspective of that person. He disapproved of this strategy by claiming that it does not improve learners’ ability to think critically. He asserted that:

“I try to teach my students how to understand what they read as they sometimes know the words in the passage, but they do not understand it. This means that they do not have the necessary critical thinking skills that are needed to understand what they read, and this is something they did not acquire in high school. Because of that I teach them how to use their previous knowledge, how to create good ideas, and how to analyze. In my opinion, these skills are more important than writing a story about others’ feelings. Critical thinking is part of their life. You will not be fulfilled in your future life if you do not know how to think critically.”

He takes a different attitude than the others by supporting critical thinking that is usually taught in reading classes. Unlike the other instructors, Instructor 2 is in favor of academic skills teaching, but she opposes the idea of balanced instruction. For her, students should learn academic skills, which are much more beneficial than writing a story.

Obviously, teaching academic skills is another issue on which the instructors contrast. Some instructors are pleased with teaching academic reading, but they are not happy with teaching academic writing. They believe that balanced reading and writing instruction can be applied in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses. In their opinion, it is not suitable for

Foundation Program's students. The following dialogue between the researcher and instructor 4 illustrates this issue:

Researcher: *"Is it difficult to have balanced instruction when teaching academic reading and academic writing?"*

Instructor 4: *"No, I do not think so, but I think we have to teach academic reading and writing separately."*

Researcher: *"Do you mean it will not be a problem if you used balanced instruction in teaching academic reading and writing?"*

Instructor 4: *"Yes, no problem to use it."*

The above interaction suggests that instructors have approved of the use of balanced reading and writing instruction, but their contrast came from the different syllabi of reading and writing that leads to teaching these two skills separately. Writing essay types are considered as challenging tasks in the academic writing syllabus. Such assignments are difficult for learners who have limited or no knowledge in English language. Thus, it is overwhelming for Foundation Program's students. Students face a number of obstacles in learning academic writing skills and the instructors realize this fact, so they believe that balanced reading and writing instruction could be a pretext to avoid academic skills.

On the contrary, the reading and writing syllabus contains a number of academic skills such as identifying the supportive ideas and making inferences, which could be more controllable for learners. As reported by the instructors, the outcomes of academic reading are more successful than the outcomes of academic writing.

Instructor 1 has unique belief that a balance in reading and writing teaching methods could not directly benefit Foundation Program students. He thinks that the modification that would happen in the reading and writing syllabus could not make unmotivated learners pass the program and would not help them improve their language acquisition. For him, the teaching methods used in class do not matter because keen students will always learn, and careless students will never learn regardless of the strategies used. He asserted:

“Frankly speaking, I believe that the change in the ways we teach would not affect their progress or their English level. We have two types of students, good and bad. What I mean by good and bad is we have motivated students who are keen and able to learn, and we have some students who do not care, and they are forced to come here. The college for those is a place where they could spend some time with their friends. They do not want to learn. I do not believe that even if our way of teaching has changed, those students will be better.”

He clarified the point that if the learners decided to learn English language, no change would affect their achievement for different reasons. His point came from the fact that a large number of Foundation Program’s students are unmotivated. Those learners have enrolled in the college by force that would be from their parents or from the Higher education policy that obligates them to meet the college requirements to enroll in the program streams. As those students will not be allowed to register in any program unless they have adequate English skills. Consequently, the Foundation Program’s instructors have to encourage and engage those students who would not be interested in learning English and think that it will not be used in their future careers.

The results of the interviews have revealed that Foundation Program’s instructors have various attitudes regarding the use of balanced reading and writing teaching methods. While some of them are happy with teaching reading and writing separately, the other part is enthusiastic about making a change and using balanced instruction when teaching reading and writing. Instructors’ frustration with the current syllabus was an interesting point that emerged from the interviews. In addition, this frustration was presented as their positive attitudes toward a balance in teaching reading and writing that was due to misunderstanding that a balanced syllabus could not focus on English academic skills.

5.4 Conclusion

The questionnaire and interview data have showed some contrasting opinions between Foundation Program instructors. Some of them approved of a balance in reading and writing teaching methods, but others tend to be satisfied with the separation in reading and writing syllabus. Instructors who are not in favor of balanced instruction stated that they do not accept this balance because -in their opinion- the current curriculum of reading and writing is not

appropriate for such a step. In some parts of the interview, some instructors claimed that a balance in reading and writing is not important, but then they said that this balance could be useful for first year learners. Their contrasted thoughts came out when they gave more information about the definition of balanced instruction and its potential effect on students' writing performance. This indicates that their negative attitudes towards a balance in reading and writing teaching methods might change if they had the needed training on how to implement those methods.

On the other hand, the instructors who are positive towards balanced reading and writing teaching methods believe that this technique is very suitable for Foundation Program learners. In general, those instructors believe that a balanced instruction technique is helpful in improving first-year learners' reading and writing abilities, and they feel that they are ready to apply this strategy to Foundation Program students. Some instructors brought out some obstacles that would hinder implementing this balance such as the level of their knowledge about balanced instruction, the limited time they have, and the material used. What they know about balanced reading and writing instruction is imprecise, because of that they feel that instructors are required to have PD sessions to be able to apply balanced reading and writing strategies to their students.

The data collected from the achievement tests revealed that students' scores in the post-test are remarkably higher than their scores in pre-test, which suggests that the program of balanced reading and writing teaching methods has a positive effect on their writing abilities.

Chapter 6: Findings Interpretation

6.1 Instructors' Attitudes

Each of the research questions has been addressed in the discussion of the findings. The first question inquired Foundation Program instructors' perceptions and practices regarding a balance of teaching L2 reading and writing. The vast majority of the instructors were in favor of a balance in teaching reading and writing, in addition to the point that they are not satisfied with those skills' curriculum separation. Those instructors believe that the discrete skills syllabus does not enable the first-year students to transfer the skills they learned from one to another, as they do not see the language system as a whole. In their opinion, teaching reading and writing skills separately would hinder the acquisition of a second language. These results agree with the outcomes of the theory of planned behavior which confirms that positive attitudes and support can boost an individual's motivation. Feeling appreciated and encouraged can increase their desire to achieve goals. Conversely, negative attitudes or lack of support can demotivate individuals. If they perceive that others don't believe in their abilities or don't value their efforts, their motivation may wane. Accordingly, an individual's motivation is intricately connected to attitudes, both their own and those of the people and society around them. Positive attitudes, support, and a conducive social environment can enhance motivation, while negative attitudes, lack of support, or discouragement can hinder it. Understanding and managing these factors is essential for fostering and sustaining motivation in various aspects of life (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017; Cook, 2009).

Therefore, these beliefs are in parallel with Durukan (2011) who suggests that because reading and writing skills share general characteristics, teaching them separately means that teachers are ignoring their constructional purposes. For instance, if teachers want to effectuate the purpose of reading, they should emphasize the writing components. If they want to create a purpose for reading. If the teacher failed to provide a reading purpose, learners will study reading without having a purpose for that practice.

Some instructors added that reading and writing balanced instruction enables students to produce writing essays that are based on the reading texts that they studied in the reading classes.

They believe that when reading is taught separately, learners develop their reading skills as they only read what is written. Consequently, students write their essays without getting benefits from professional authors' writing productions. On the other hand, they recommended that Foundation Program learners would be attentive receivers and active producers if a balance in reading and writing instruction has been implemented as they will incorporate what they have learned in reading classes with their writing essays. Instructors' points of views are in line with Stevens *et. al.* (1987) opinion regarding the relationship between reading and writing. They see that reading and writing skills are having a mutual relationship that is approximately similar to taking and giving. In addition, the ideas of three instructors reflected Tynjälä (2001) thoughts who implied that people usually cannot learn to speak without hearing others talk, likewise, students cannot learn to produce good essays without reading professional writers' products.

Instructor 2 thinks that a balance in reading and writing instruction would be beneficial for Foundation Program learners. He said that when students read and grasp the information in the reading texts, they would be able to use these passages as a model, which helps them express their ideas in their own essays. Considering his experience in teaching Foundation Program's students, he seemed to perceive balanced instruction as the effect of reading skills on writing abilities; this attitude echoes Bosley's (2008) perception. However, he expressed his overall satisfaction with reading and writing separate curriculum. This result instigates knowing why he does not agree with reading and writing balanced instruction if he thinks it would be useful for Foundation Program learners. In general, his suspicion about a balance in reading and writing teaching methods comes from the point that the current curriculum expectations from students, and program's objective are totally different, which in his opinion makes the implementation of such methods impossible. Consequently, he was satisfied with the present syllabi.

As instructors affirm canceling reading and writing academic skills, some of them feel that they are sacrificing their teaching quality since they combine these skills into the syllabus. Only instructor 1 pointed out his complete pleasure with the separation in the reading and writing current curriculum. He believes that this separation allows the instructors to teach very beneficial material to their learners. He indicated that they received positive feedback from his students. In addition, he doubted the success of a balance in reading and writing instruction. He questioned whether other instructors in the Foundation Program have enough knowledge to be

able to implement a balanced reading and writing teaching methods, but he could not ensure whether he would drop the reading and writing current curriculum that is used by everyone.

Interviews data have emerged some contrasted beliefs among Foundation Program's instructors. Although a fairly good number of instructors think that balanced instruction would be useful for their learners, some of them expressed their rejection of this balance. Instructor 5 signified the point that no creative innovation regardless of whether it is a balanced approach or anything else would give the Foundation Program's students the motivation needed to improve their essay writing performance. The learners who were forced to enroll in the program essentially do not have the desire to learn a second language because of that they are incapable of improving their language skills regardless of the methods used in class. Differently, motivated learners are willing to improve their language skills without having their teachers to use other creative innovation to teach English language. This somehow contradicts the other thoughts that instructor 5 has about his learners. He believes that the methods used in teaching reading and writing have received positive feedback from the learners and in his opinion, no instruction methods would change the unmotivated learners' perceptions regarding English learning. Such a point of view would be considered as prejudice against reading and writing balanced teaching methods and accordingly, he tries to logically justify his objection to this approach.

These findings clarify the contrasted perceptions of Foundation Program instructors regarding a balance in teaching reading and writing. This contrast in the instructors' attitudes might possibly be due to the difference in the content of reading and writing current curriculum. Although the learners are happy with the reading material, it is difficult for them to cope with the writing contents as they feel that it is loaded with challenging academic skills. Foundation Program's learners have always been dissatisfied with the heavy writing material and complained about the challenges they face in generating ideas with small input offered in the class. Therefore, instructor 1, instructor 4, and instructor 7 are in favor of having reading passages in writing classes as this could provide their students with the needed input to produce good essays. The same way, writing curriculum has included some reading texts to be used as models during writing classes. However, in practice, instructors who usually focus on writing skills feel safer with the concept of balanced instruction more than the ones who focus on reading. In addition, the findings revealed that instructors' experience, the level they teach, and

the degree they hold would contribute to their different perceptions towards a balance in teaching reading and writing.

The majority of the instructors have raised an important issue that is teaching academic writing skills for Foundation Program students. They indicated that teaching academic writing would be an obstacle to making a balance in reading and writing instruction. Instructor 4 insisted on the point that discarding the academic material from the writing curriculum is necessary if instructors want to implement a balance in teaching reading and writing. He believes that his learners have tremendous challenges in coping with academic writing skills, and he thinks that Foundation Program students have to be taught material that is needed in their program stream and their future life. Instructor 7 agreed with others on the point that the material of writing curriculum is heavy for Foundation Program students. In his opinion, academic writing material makes writing classes boring, and consequently, implementing a balance in reading and writing instruction could complicate the situation. Although writing lessons involve difficult academic skills, writing classes could not be that boring if more interesting strategies are used.

Interviewed instructors feel that it will not be an easy process to use reading texts when writing different types of essays as it would be difficult to find suitable reading passages for each particular model. These results contradict what has been found in literature. Focusing on reading models used in academic writing classes, instructors started to have their students to read, think critically, analyze, and produce essays that match the texts they have learned (Bickerstaff & Cormier, 2015). Using different rhetoric models could help first year students enhance their English language skills and gain knowledge. Certainly, literature advocates a balance in teaching writing and reading, especially when teaching academic writing skills. This directly contrasts with the perceptions of the vast number of instructors.

On the other hand, some instructors were in favor of implementing a balance in teaching reading and writing in one condition that is having their focus on reading academic skills as in their opinion this balance could be effective without canceling those skills. Likewise, literature has not found any problem with having balanced teaching methods to teach academic reading. Hirvela (2004) views English reading tasks as a source of balanced skills. In his opinion, a balance in teaching reading and writing can be used as preparatory stage to combine various

tasks together, which could help first year students enhance their overall academic skills. In general, Foundation Program's instructors feel that reading academic skills could facilitate implementing a balance in teaching reading and writing and it would not complicate the situation.

All instructors asserted the necessity of teachers training and the procedures that should be followed to prepare Foundation Program's instructors for balanced reading and writing teaching methods. Their participation in the current study has alerted their attention to the importance of their role as decision-makers in the Foundation Program. They understand that they would be responsible for introducing a balanced approach to the higher management and convincing them to approve the change in the current curricular. A number of arguments has been raised in the literature regarding instructors' awareness of their roles in higher education institutions. Eggleston (2018) signifies the point that it is the responsibility of decision-maker to clarify the argment actions that should be taken and present the connection between those actions and proposal to stakeholders.

In acknowledgement of this attention, Foundation Program's instructors have a common agreement on the point that there is a need to have an expert and knowledgeable trainer as they feel that they do not have enough information and knowledge about how to implement a balance in teaching reading and writing. At this point, the instructors have been divided into two groups. Some of them, especially who focus on writing skills, do not have any problem with using their knowledge of balanced instruction, but others –who focus on reading skills- claimed that they know nothing about it. This situation would suggest that instructors who have information about a balanced approach could give such training sessions for those who do not. This disagreement would be connected to their various attitudes regarding a balance in teaching reading and writing as some of them were positive to use a balanced approach, while others have negative perceptions towards it. The variation in instructors' attitudes might reflect their certainty about their information, or the level of their satisfaction with the program's current situation.

Instructors who focus on writing skills believe that others have positive opinions regarding a balance in teaching reading and writing. This matches Prachagool et.al. (2016) opinion who stated that the attitudes of the teachers towards innovative ideas is essential to adopt

it as they are the ones who will implement those innovations. Foundation Program's instructors have expressed their positive feeling regarding a balance in teaching reading and writing, but they believe that the majority of the program's instructors are not ready to apply a balanced approach. This is due to the fact that they used to teach these two skills separately since they started their teaching journey. Instructor 7, in particular, was quite sure that a large number of instructors do not know how to use a balanced instruction approach. He could not imagine that he was able to use this approach as he always taught these two skills separately. In general, all interviewed instructors believe that PD sessions are crucial to get the teachers ready to implement a balance in teaching reading and writing.

The need for equipping Foundation Program's instructors with the necessary tools for innovative ideas to be adopted has been affirmed by Weigle (2004). He suggested that the implementation of an innovation will be limited if the teachers' professional development has not proceeded in parallel with that implementation. The need for higher education instructors to have upcoming innovative ideas has been cited in earlier literature. For instance, Chavkin and Williams (1988) have indicated that teachers grasp the importance of innovation and its implementation in classroom setting through professional training sessions. The need for having enough information about an innovation has been signified by instructor 5. He believes that instructors have to be asked about the knowledge they have regarding balanced reading and writing teaching methods before starting the PD sessions. This would give them a chance to give suggestions and feedback about how to implement this approach.

6.2 Achievement tests

A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to test if there is a statistical significant mean difference between intervention and control groups on the post-test score after controlling their pretest score as a covariate. This has been done after verifying the homogeneity of regression slope and ensure that it was not violated ($F=2.317$, $p=0.137$). The results of the achievement tests are compatible with the outcomes of schema theory, social cognitive theory and self-efficacy, and emergent literacy theory. When analyzing achievement test results, the researcher could consider how students' pre-existing schemas influenced their understanding of test items. Schema theory enabled the researcher to examine how students'

cognitive processes, such as schema activation and integration, played a role in their performance on the achievement tests' items. Likewise, social cognitive theory that emphasizes the role of observational learning and role models allowed the researcher to consider how exposure to successful peers, teachers, and educational role models would have influenced students' motivation and learning strategies and impacted their test performance. Similarly, emergent literacy theory pertains to the development of literacy skills in young children. Connecting this theory to achievement tests has been done by considering how early literacy experiences, such as exposure to books, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary development, would predict later success on literacy-related tests. Ultimately, linking achievement test results to these theories helped the researcher gain insights into the cognitive, social, and motivational factors that underlie students' performance. This knowledge can inform instructional strategies and interventions to support students in their educational journey.

The results suggested that there was a statistical significant mean differences between the two groups ($F=129.406$, $p\leq 0.001$, $\eta^2=0.778$). In other words, the intervention group has a significantly higher mean (30.95 ± 5.81) than the control group (13.62 ± 3.24). It has been found that the adjusted mean for intervention group and control group were (30.70 and 13.87) respectively. This indicates that a balanced reading and writing instruction program has enhanced students' achievement scores in the intervention group more than the control group. Besides, the eta squared for the effect size ($\eta^2=0.778$) which indicated that 77.8% of variation in posttest score has been explained by the groups and the eta squared was higher than value of 0.14. This has been determined by (Cohen, 1988) who implied that a balanced reading and writing instruction program had a large effect on students' achievement test scores.

The improvement in learners' scores would be attributed to a balance in teaching reading and writing skills that held a number of benefits such as addressing students' various learning styles. This has been achieved by employing more than one sense using different types of activities and strategies. These techniques improved first year students' learning approaches, enhanced their language understanding, developed their progress, and established an interactive atmosphere, which raised their motivation to learn those two skills. A balanced reading and writing program has given the students a chance to get ongoing feedback and allowed them to reflect on their own work, which could support their class interaction. Accordingly, it has been

found that there is an agreement between this result and what the current research indicated in the literature review.

The achievement tests' findings almost agree with the findings of Tompkins (1997); Pressley et.al. (2002); and Graham, Liu, Aitken, Bartlett, Harris, and Holzapfel (2018) which demonstrated the efficiency of a balance in teaching reading and writing and its positive effect on improving learners' writing performance in particular and English language skills in general.

It is important to mention that the effect size of a balanced reading and writing program regarding the form was not big. This is because of the characteristics of this element in which the use of punctuation, abbreviations, connectors, and capitalization is essential. Although the first element that the researcher focused on during the intervention was the form, the results showed that first-year students do not know how to apply the self-learning technique. Accordingly, it is highly recommended to reinvestigate the impact of balanced reading and writing teaching on the writing form.

6.3 Conclusion

Depending on the findings mentioned above, it can be concluded that a balance in teaching reading and writing can help the Foundation Program's instructors create enjoyable, variable, motivated, and enthusiastic activities that would improve students writing performance. This could be achieved by preparing plans that involve various and balanced reading and writing activities, especially for shy students to allow them to interact effectively in the class.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter includes a brief description of the study's main findings regarding each research question, recommendation outlines that are basically connected to the Foundation Program in higher education institutions, study limitations, and finally suggestions for future investigations and studies.

7.1 A brief description of the main findings

The results of the intervention and the achievement tests, instructors' questionnaire and interviews revealed that the techniques used in a balanced reading and writing teaching program are suitable for first-year students and can be implemented if the instructors get appropriate training from knowledgeable people.

After discussing the techniques of a balanced reading and writing instruction program with the Foundation Program instructors, the vast majority of them have reported that the strategies employed in a balanced instruction program are helpful for improving learners' reading and writing skills. The strategies used in the program have been described in Hirvela (2004) model, and it included material from both reading and writing. These strategies have an effect on reading skills that can directly influence first-year students' writing abilities and vice versa. Foundation Program instructors have advocated Hirvela's model that shows a balanced design as distinguished if it is compared to other models that focus only on one skill.

Regarding some specific strategies, academic writing was one of the arguable strategies that are mostly mentioned in the literature (Abbott, Reed, Abbott, & Berninger (1997); Asselin (1999); Bitter, O'Day, Gubbins, & Socias (2009)). Most of the Foundation Program instructors think that academic writing *is somewhat* suitable for first-year learners. The literature review has supported academic writing usage since it is one of the helpful strategies in a balanced reading and writing instruction program. Zhu (2004) asserted the significance of academic writing regarding enhancing learners' reading and writing performance. He said that "academic writing helps learners to conclude that the reader uses the texts as a base to do something and gives meaning to what he/she does. Accordingly, reading can be defined as a process of

composing” (p. 378). Academic writing could help first-year learners have a better understanding of the reading passages by giving them a chance to reflect on these texts using their own reactions in a form of writing. In such a way, Foundation Program learners will be able to develop their reading and writing skills using one strategy.

Note-taking is another strategy that has been used in the intervention and has been discussed with Foundation Program instructors. They showed mixed points of view when note taking was compared to academic writing. Those who think that notetaking *is somehow* suitable for Foundation Program learners can be considered to have a positive attitude towards this strategy with some reservations. However, a small number of instructors believe that this strategy does not make a difference in students’ writing abilities. Those can be described as having general negative perceptions towards a balance in teaching reading and writing.

The previously mentioned results indicate that Foundation Program instructors believe that they could face some problems when implementing balanced reading and writing instruction although they think that it contains very effective techniques. Those difficulties would come from the fact that a balanced reading and writing approach is not similar to the traditional methods. Consequently, Foundation Program instructors may not be familiar with balanced instruction procedures and strategies, which would need effort and time to implement it. Other techniques might require physical and mental efforts from both instructors and first-year students that are reading passages, writing summaries, and note-taking. These strategies necessitate the instructors to give constructive feedback by checking each learner’s work periodically.

Another strategy has been used in the intervention and has been discussed with Foundation Program instructors that is graphic organizers. The majority of the instructors were unfamiliar with this technique as “graphic organizer” term is not a common activity that is used in the class. This strategy was used to teach first-year students how to figure out the main idea, write information, and compare the content of different passages. Then, the learners write about the reading texts using the graphic organizers they already gathered.

A large number of the participants have positive attitudes regarding a balance in teaching reading and writing. The strategies used in the intervention and had the approval of the majority

of Foundation Program instructors are: connecting information introduced in new passages with the ones that have been read previously using free writing skills, essay unity, using new knowledge obtained from reading texts in the writing tasks, critically analyzing authors' points of view and write their opinion in a form of essay, and writing about their personal experiences and connect it with some reading passages. The instructors have approved these strategies because they are easy to implement and do not require much preparation.

The findings of the current study have revealed some differences in instructors' perceptions, which would be due to some problems related to the context of Foundation Program such as time limits, learners' abilities, material used, and instructors' knowledge of balanced reading and writing instruction. The program instructors had some concerns regarding having experience in designing balanced syllabuses and putting the designed material into practice. Moreover, a balanced instruction program includes some strategies that could be higher than the students' abilities, which would require more time than the curriculum provides to implement it successfully. Although the previously mentioned strategies are beneficial for first-year students' reading and writing performance, the instructors might not think it is appropriate as it focuses on academic writing, which is considered as very difficult skill for those students.

The instructors also were asked to evaluate their readiness to apply balanced reading and writing instruction strategies in the Foundation Program. They reported that they are ready to use some strategies such as connect learners' experience with reading texts and write about it, and using new knowledge obtained from reading texts in the writing tasks. Their positive perceptions towards the application of these two strategies could stem from their feeling that they would affect and enhance learners' reading and writing performance. Additionally, these two strategies do not sound problematic for Foundation Program instructors.

A considerable number of the instructors feel that they are not well prepared to use the following strategies: academic writing, note-taking, critically analyzing authors' points of view and the use of graphic organizer. Academic writing and note-taking would require time and effort from the instructors because of that they are not commonly employed in the class nor practiced by Foundation Program learners. In addition, instructors would meet some difficulties while preparing the needed material for graphic organizers strategy and put it in the context of

classroom. Finally, analyzing authors' points of view and using critical thinking in writing demands a high level of reading and writing skills. Because of all previously mentioned reasons, Foundation Program instructors feel they are not ready to implement balanced reading and writing instruction in their classes.

The connection between instructors' confidence and their attitudes of balanced reading and writing instruction has been discussed with some of the participants. The instructors have reported that they have positive feelings towards the strategies used in a balanced program and they believe that they could enhance Foundation Program students' writing abilities. Their positive attitude might stem from the fact that they are confident in implementing balanced program strategies in their reading and writing classes.

7.2 Recommendations

It has been asserted by Harris, Graham, and Mason (2003) that stakeholders have to fulfill their commitments by realizing their potentials and building foundations to successfully adopt a balance in teaching reading and writing. Decision makers in the Foundation Program have to be included in the creation of balanced reading and writing instruction as they are considered experts. This should be done through arranged PD sessions. At the level of their potential realization, stakeholders should have the commitment to support and monitor Foundation Program instructors who could apply the innovation. Decision makers in Foundation Program have to be responsible for creating PD sessions to explain the concepts of a balance in teaching reading and writing. Then, they have to promote and observe the instructors during the application process to guarantee a successful implementation of the innovation.

Adopting a balance in teaching reading and writing cannot be completed by the efforts of Foundation Program instructors only. As mentioned by the study participants, it is collaborative work between the instructors, Program Team Leaders (PTLs), and higher management. Heerwagen, Kampschroer, Powell, and Loftness (2004) have asserted the point that the decision-makers have to foster the engagement of the instructors in the process of decision making to be able to create a collaborative work environment. It is important to increase the awareness of Foundation Program instructors of the potential change in the curriculum and

encourage them to actively engage in the process of decision making by investigating their attitudes regarding a balance in teaching reading and writing skills.

It has been found that the majority of the Foundation Program instructors are positive towards the adoption of balanced reading and writing instruction, which can be considered a good step to start preparing the curriculum to implement that balance. However, the study participants have emphasized the need for PD sessions if such adoption has been decided. Foundation Program instructors need theoretical and practical training about the implementation of balanced reading and writing instruction. Fennick and Liddy (2001) have suggested that the innovation could fail if there was not enough emphasis given to the teachers' qualifications. On the other hand, both instructors and students will get benefits if well-prepared PD sessions have been created.

The PD sessions could be planned by knowledgeable and expert people to be able to fulfill the needs of Foundation Program instructors. Now, most of the participants do not think they are able to give such PD sessions to their colleagues. Some of them openly said that they need these PD sessions, and they think that PTLs also should enroll in these sessions. Another suggestion for these PD sessions is that experts could train the Program Team Leaders and then the PTLs would efficiently use what they learned to train their teams' members.

To ensure these PD sessions work as anticipated, there are some important points that should be considered such as instructors' frustrations with the status quo as suggested by Moore (2012), which is the use of a discrete skills curriculum. In addition, instructors must have the interest to take these PD sessions. This can be achieved by having them understand the importance of these PD sessions to successfully implement a balance in reading and writing instruction. At this stage, higher management in the Foundation Program has to take a balance in teaching reading and writing seriously and reflect the need for the PD sessions to program's instructors as a kind of support.

According to Crowe (2011), the reason behind instructors being a key in any innovational program is that they do not have enough knowledge about the context of that program concerning learners, the material used, and the feasibility of the implementation. Accordingly, the participants have reported that the material used, and the time limitation are

two major problems that affect the teaching methods used by Foundation Program instructors. These two problematic issues have to be taken seriously by the higher management during the process of implementing a balance in teaching reading and writing. Given equal importance, during the PD sessions and before the real implementation of balanced instruction, instructors have to be assured that the problematic issues will be solved, and it will not make balanced instruction complicated. As stated by Frost (2012), having the instructors aware of the benefits and outcomes of innovation is one of the essential points in the implementation of that innovation. Consequently, decision makers have to consider instructors' qualifications and knowledge about the program's actual contexts and ensure that they have solutions to the problematic issues. By applying the previously mentioned suggestions, the implementation of balanced reading and writing teaching methods in Foundation Program would be successful.

Foundation Program learners' needs analysis is another aspect to successfully implement a balance in teaching reading and writing. It is important to conduct a need analysis for students who are studying in the Foundation Program to determine the effectiveness of implementing a balance in teaching reading and writing and the curriculum sections that need to be changed. This step should be taken before deciding on the adoption of balanced instruction. Students' needs analysis would clarify the expectations of Foundation Program learners from the implementation of balanced instruction and the skills that should be added to the program to get the maximum benefits to pass.

Piloting a balance in reading and writing teaching methods in Foundation Program is another recommendation. A new balanced reading and writing syllabus for one class can be created after finishing the PD sessions. During the application period, instructors would give regular reports and feedback to the higher management about the implementation of balanced reading and writing instruction and learners' progress. By doing this, the issues faced by instructors and their learners can be realized and possible solutions would be suggested to overcome these obstacles. Moreover, it would be easier to get Foundation Program instructors' approval to implement a balance in teaching reading and writing if progress has been reported among the program learners who study reading and writing separately.

The negative impact of academic writing on a balance in teaching reading and writing is another issue that has been raised by the study participants during the interviews. The literature has revealed contrasting views on this problem saying that a balance in teaching reading and writing is an appropriate approach that can be used with first-year students. Accordingly, one of the points that the trainers should focus on during the PD sessions is the methods of incorporating English for Academic Purposes (EAP) material and writing skills in a balanced approach.

Depending on the findings of the current study, some applicable recommendations have been introduced to answer the concerns of Foundation Program instructors, Program team leaders (PTLs), and the curriculum designers and decision makers.

Implementing a balance in teaching reading and writing requires relearners' Foundation Program instructors to psychologically shift from using the traditional methods to teach English language skills to the use of a balanced reading and writing instruction; establish productive and fruitful learning environment by creating effective lesson plans; encourage Foundation Program learners to think about English language as a whole system not as separate skills; and adequately employ the teaching strategies and techniques that would enhance learners English language skills in general and their reading and writing skills in particular.

The application of a balanced reading and writing teaching methods requires the PTLs to activate the role of a balanced instruction program by changing the role of the instructors from only teachers who control the classroom into educators who support, facilitate, and direct the learners to be independent and self-learners. Moreover, PTLs should be responsible for the PD sessions that will be conducted to enhance Foundation Program instructors' competencies to adequately implement a balance in teaching reading and writing.

Finally, decision makers and curriculum designers also play an important role in the implementation of a balance in reading and writing instruction, as they have to enrich the Foundation Program curriculum with various activities that is based on a balance in teaching reading and writing. In addition, encouraging Foundation Program instructors and supporting them by preparing and running training sessions are considered as decision makers' responsibility.

7.3 Study limitations

The current study has a number of limitations that would be summarized as follows: The results cannot be generalized as a limited number of Foundation Program instructors have participated in the study. It would be difficult to claim that the findings reflect all Foundation Program instructors' perceptions regarding a balance in teaching reading and writing. Instructors' positive perceptions and their need for PD sessions are results gained from the interviewed instructors who were only seven.

Time constraints are another limitation of the current study as the intervention has been conducted in a very limited period of time. The experiment took place at the beginning of the second semester, and it was run for one month. In the researcher's opinion, the results might be different if enough time had been given.

Another challenge the researcher would face is related to investigating the challenges that students face in writing assignments. The researcher wants to explore this problem that students face in essay in depth through the analysis of actual samples of work produced by students during an entire year on a semester-by-semester basis.

In addition, the number of students who participated in the intervention was small, which affects the generalization of the achievement tests results. The interviews were conducted with the Foundation Program instructors only. From the researcher's point of view, a comprehensive picture about implementing a balanced program would be gained if the PTLs were involved in the study.

7.4 Suggestions for future studies

The current study aims to investigate the effectiveness of a balance in reading and writing teaching methods in Foundation Program, and how that would affect learners' essay writing abilities in higher education institutions in the UAE. Additional research studies would be conducted to investigate schoolteachers' attitude towards a balance in teaching reading and writing and the effect of their classroom practices on school students' writing abilities. Such investigation would be conducted in the form of a wide-scale questionnaire, interviews, and extensive class observations.

The use of classroom observations is another instrument that can be employed to collect data about the effect of using a balance in teaching reading and writing. Instructors who were part of the current study could be observed if a balanced instruction was implemented in the Foundation Program. It would be important to explore whether there is a link between instructors' beliefs and their practices inside the classroom.

It also would be interesting to use surveys and interviews to explore the perception of the instructors who are implementing a balance in teaching reading and writing and compare it with the attitude of those who teach these two skills separately. Such research could bring out more details about instructors' perceptions regarding the teaching methods they use in their classes and reveal essential differences between the strategies used in teaching reading and writing. In addition, such research may suggest a variety of benefits that would be gained from implementing both approaches and have a positive effect on learners' writing performance.

In the context of the Foundation Program, another survey can be conducted, and follow-up interviews would be administered if the instructors and PTLs have PD sessions on how to implement a balance in teaching reading and writing. Such studies would explore the effect of the PD sessions on the level of their knowledge and understanding of the implementation of balanced instruction. This research would reveal the difference in instructors' and PTLs' attitudes as their familiarity with a balance in teaching reading and writing has grown.

According to what previously mentioned, it is suggested to investigate the effect of implementing a balance in teaching reading and writing on learners' critical thinking and problem solving. In addition, it is important to examine the efficiency of employing a balanced approach with learners who have difficulties in English language in general. Finally, there is a need to investigate the effectiveness of using a balance in teaching reading and writing in the public and private schools and how that would affect learners' English language in general and their reading and writing abilities in particular.

7.5 Conclusion

The results of the data collected from instructors' questionnaire and interviews have revealed various attitudes regarding implementing a balance in teaching reading and writing.

Some instructors have highly approved of a balanced approach. However, it has been noticed that their positive attitude towards balanced instruction was because they thought that implementing a balanced approach would lead to discarding academic writing from Foundation Program curriculum. On the contrary, other instructors were reluctant to use a balance in teaching reading and writing as they stated that they agree with the separate reading and writing syllabus.

The questionnaire findings have revealed that Foundation Program instructors believe that it could be possible to implement a balance in teaching reading and writing, but there is a need to change the reading and writing current curriculum. Moreover, the results suggested some problematic issues that Foundation Program instructors would face during the implementation of a balanced approach such as time limitations and used material. Such issues would be used as signs to attract curriculum developers' attention.

The collected data have revealed another essential finding that is the need for PD sessions to enable Foundation Program instructors to correctly implement a balance in teaching reading and writing. Although the instructors have reported that they understand the meaning of a balance in teaching reading and writing, they feel that they need to be more familiar with the implementation of a balanced approach in their classroom. The majority of the interviewed instructors feel that their knowledge is not sufficient to conduct such PD sessions. They suggested having knowledgeable and expert people to run these training sessions.

Finally, yet importantly, the majority of Foundation Program instructors are positive regarding the implementation of a balance in teaching reading and writing. They believe that such implementation could benefit Foundation Program's learners, especially those who are keen to improve their English language in general and their reading and writing performance in particular. Furthermore, the instructors feel that the strategies employed in a balanced approach are appropriate to be implemented in Foundation Program regardless of the problematic issues they may face during this implementation.

The findings of the current study have demonstrated the significance of instructors' attitudes regarding an innovation and their involvement in the implementation of such innovation. In both design and implementation process, curriculum designers and decision-

makers have to give serious and careful thought to instructors' concerns. Moreover, the results of the current study would attract the attention of Foundation Program's decision-makers to the significance of PD sessions in all stages of any innovation. Last but not least, the current study gives evidence for a balanced approach proponent about the dissatisfaction of Foundation Program instructors with the separation in the program's curriculum. In addition to that, they believe that the use of a balance in teaching reading and writing has a positive effect on students' English language in general and reading and writing abilities in particular.

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Appendices

Appendix (1): Achievement test

Writing Achievement Test for B1 Students in Foundations Programs

Student's Name:

Student's Level:

Mark:40

Time: (90 minutes)

Q1: Read the following passage then answer the questions below.

At college

At college and university students are more independent and they do more work at home. If you have to write an essay or a report it may take a long time so you may not have enough time in class. For this reason, it is also important to be able to work alone.

Going to the lecture is like an introduction to a topic. Then you have to read and write about it afterwards to really learn about the subject. Another time when you have to work outside college is when you have to revise for an exam. Revision needs peace and quiet, so it is useful to work at home or in a library. At college it helps if you are intelligent, but it is not enough just to be smart – you also have to be well organized, whether you are in college or at home. It is amazing how many students do badly because they leave their stuff at home, so they come to class without homework, paper and pen or the computer, day after day. We have to be efficient, and this means taking the right things to class, keeping your computer files and folders well organized and knowing how to store and save your documents so that you can find things easily. If you cannot find your notes on a subject, then you cannot review it for the exam.

There is one more thing I should mention. Education is not all about getting a qualification at a big ceremony. It is a journey of personal development when you find out about yourself and the world. It should be an adventure. You may get your education for free, or you may pay a fee, but the main aim is always the same: to learn, develop and grow so you can be fully yourself.

Q1-In the light of the previous passage, write an essay using your own words about which mode of delivery would work better for you as a college student, and why?

.....

Q2- Rearrange the following sentences of a paragraph whose general drift indicates cause-effect development? (5 marks)

1- Land, air and water pollution kill some organisms directly and kill others because their food disappears. ()

2- Scientists want to sound the alarm because human activity is attacking the environment on an enormous scale. ()

3- We are killing our environment, and this is a crime. ()

4- This is frightening because it involves killing millions of lifeforms which we do not even know about, and even if they are tiny, they may perform very important roles which benefit and protect other species and us. ()

5- We kill our environment in two ways: by actually destroying it and by polluting it. ()

Q3- Read the following paragraph then answer the questions below? (5 marks)

One thing about education is absolutely certain: it is difficult to live without it! If you have any ambition, any sort of life plan, you will need to learn something in order to do it. Every time you write a job application, they ask for your qualifications and experience and before you get the work experience you need to have some kind of qualification, even if you want to be a cook or a driver. Once you are qualified to do a job you can earn a living for many years, so it is very important to think about what kind of work you are suited for. It may seem very obvious, but it really helps if this work makes you feel satisfied and happy. It is surprising how many people want jobs that pay well, but don't enjoy their work at all or even take jobs that they are totally unsuited for. Parents often give children advice regarding well-paid jobs, but they do not think enough about what the children really want and like. Because of this it is important for you to think properly about what you want to do, learn about different jobs and try to get some work experience. Even a temporary job for one week can tell you a lot about how it feels to do this work full-time. If you are lucky, you will find a job that suits you perfectly, but you can help yourself by trying to learn as much as you can about yourself and about different kinds of work. Are you a people person or do you prefer to work alone? Do you want to be outdoors, or do you prefer the fun of being in an office?

1- Does the first sentence tell the topic of the paragraph?

.....

2- Do the remaining sentences give supporting details about the topic?

.....

3- Is the information presented in a logical order?

.....

4- Are linking words used to connect ideas where appropriate?

.....

5- Is the paragraph easy to understand?

.....

Q4- Complete each of the following paragraphs with an appropriate topic sentence from those given below. (5 marks)

1- They are recognized as luxury products with a delicious and unique taste. Some of Valentino's finest chocolates are handmade and have won many international awards.

The company's owners want Valentino to become an international business. They believe they make the finest chocolates in the world.

a- Valentino can continue to grow.

b- Valentino chocolate is made in Turin, Italy.

c- The way in which Valentino could invest, the 1.5 million are listed in the table.

2-..... Communication skills, employee motivation and organizational effectiveness. If a manager has high empathy, a key component of emotional intelligence, he or she will be able to listen to the concerns of employees and will be more understanding of their needs, wants and concerns.

a- High emotional intelligence can help a manager improve workplace.

b- Emotional intelligence is a concept that is not universally understood.

c- Top-down approaches are employed in many successful businesses today.

Q5 -Examine each of the following paragraphs to see whether it violates the principles of unity, coherence, completeness, emphasis, or variety. If no violation is present, write "None" in the blank. (5 marks)

1- () Do you enjoy painting or writing stories? Are you a singer or a dancer or a musician? Many of us do these activities as a hobby, but what if you could turn your pastime into a job? You could become an artist, a writer, a dancer or a singer. Or maybe you could be an actor or actress. If you are good at your hobby and you want to work, have to get noticed. People have to know about you. The first stage to show your work in public. If people like it, you need to get a manager, someone who can get you contracts. They have to be a good businessman or businesswoman and they have to have good contacts in the field you are working

in. Then, as they say, if you are doing something you like you will never work again: at least it won't feel like work!

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2-..... Your father's and mother's parents are your grandmother and grandfather, so you have two sets of grandparents. Your grandparents probably have a few children, so the other sons are your uncles, and the other daughters are your aunts. In English there is no special word for the uncle or aunt on the mother's side or the father's side. Your uncle and aunt's children are your cousins, the same word for boys and girls. They are all cousins. Your sister's or brother's children are your nephews if they are boys and nieces if they are girls and you are their aunt or uncle. You are the son or daughter of your parents and the grandson or granddaughter of your grandparents. In English you don't need to know much more about words for relatives than that!

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.....

Q6 - Read the following paragraph and then write an appropriate topic sentence? (4 marks)

a-.....I think good managers need to be good at four things .First of all ,they need to be good at observing –that's so they can understand the behavior ,the strengths and weaknesses of their staff .The second thing is that they need to be good at listening –so they can learn about their staffs problems .The next thing is its importance for them to be good at asking questions –so they can find out all the information they need to make the right decisions. And finally, they have to be good at speaking so they can communicate their objectives clearly to their staff.

Q7- The following paragraph lacks coherence. Convert it into an effective and coherent paragraph by rearranging the order of some statements so that the clauses are joined securely and add appropriate linking devices. (4 marks)

Stand-up comedians come onstage and talk. They want to make you laugh. If people laugh, they get paid, and people ask them to come and do it again. George Carlin, the American comedian, said he has one and half thousand files on his computer – all on different topics. He is learning, noticing things, making connections. He writes his material. It is like being a student: you have to do research, then you do your rough draft of your work and then you have to check it and improve it. An enormous amount of work goes into helping people enjoy your ideas. How do you know your comedy is good? When you talk, people laugh! Funny, isn't it? And George Carlin's advice? Write stuff down. Make notes and use them!

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Q8- Write an appropriate concluding sentence for this paragraph. (4 marks)

Camping is an excellent free time activity. You can camp alone, with another person or with thousands of people. People go camping to be in nature and enjoy the fresh air and being outside. Everywhere you go there are campsites nearby and especially in national parks and areas of great natural beauty.

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.....
.....

Q9- This paragraph damages paragraph structure. Indicate why? Then write the omitted part. (3 marks)

Running is very good exercise. it helps you build strong bones and it is very good for your heart. you don't have to run fast unless you want to train for a race: you can just jog at your own speed then you can stop when you want and have a rest. the real prize for runners is increased fitness and weight loss. Runners are usually slim and fit, so if you want to lose a few kilos and get thin and why not join a club or group. If you do sport with a group or team it is more fun and you will do it more often because you make friends.

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Good Luck

Appendix (2): Teachers' interview questions

Teachers' Interview

Teacher's name:

Nationality:

Education:

Occupation:

The questions:

- 1- What is the level of your students in English?
- 2- Do you balance teaching reading and writing?
- 3- How many writing classes do you have a week?
- 4- How many reading classes do you have a week?
- 5- Is there a plan for each writing lesson?
- 6- How do you usually teach writing?
- 7- Have you ever integrated reading and writing?
- 8- What was the purpose of that integration?
- 9- Do you think the balance in teaching reading and writing would affect students' writing skills? How?
- 10- What kind of problems do your students face in writing classes?
- 11- What are the challenges do your students have in their writing tasks?
- 12- Do you use a rubric when you grade your students' essays? If no, according to what do you give the grade?
- 13- Have you ever applied a balance in teaching reading and writing?
- 14- How often did you apply it?
- 15- What did you do?
- 16- Do you think using a balanced approach in teaching reading and writing would affect students' performance in writing skills?
- 17- Do you think there is a need to give Foundations program's teachers a PD session about implementing a balance in reading and writing teaching?
- 18- Do you think one session will be enough or they will need more than one?

19- Do you think you can give a PD session to your colleagues about how to implement a balance in teaching reading and writing?

Appendix (3): Consent form

A Balanced Approach towards Teaching the Skills of L2 Reading and Writing in Foundation Program at Universities in the UAE

You are invited to participate in a research study investigating L2 reading and writing teaching methods in higher education and the effect of the balance in teaching these two skills on learners' writing performance. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be on the study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of balancing reading and writing instruction in foundation programs and how that affects learners' essay writing skills in higher education institutions in the UAE.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following: answer the questionnaire. It will take 10 minutes. You might be selected to be interviewed by the researcher to elaborate more on some issues mentioned in the questionnaire.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study: I do not anticipate any risks for you participating in this study, other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with your institution. You may skip any questions you don't feel comfortable answering. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time.

Confidentiality: Research records will be kept in a locked file (password protected computer file); only the researchers will have access to the records.

Contact mobile number of the researcher:

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

Researcher: Fathia Alfaran; mobile number: (0503563036); e-mail: falfaran@hct.ac.ae

OR

Supervisor of the research project at British University in Dubai: Dr. Tendai Charles; email: tendai.charles@buid.ac.ae

.....

(The name of the participant)

.....
(Signature of participant) (Date)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher.

Appendix (4): Teachers' questionnaire

Teachers' Attitude towards a Balance in teaching Reading and Writing Classes

Dear teacher:

This study aims to investigate the perceptions of the instructors who teach English Communications course and general studies courses regarding the effectiveness of balancing reading and writing instruction and how that affects learners' essay writing skills in higher education institutions in the UAE.

Each of the statements below expresses your attitude towards your students in reading and writing classes. Please note that there is no right or wrong answer to the statements below. Your responses to the survey will be anonymous. Participation in the survey is completely voluntary and all of your responses will be kept confidential. No personally identifiable information will be associated with your responses to any reports of these data. Thank you very much for your time and cooperation. Your feedback is very important to us.

Should you have any questions, I can be reached on 0503563036.

Section 1:

1. Your education.

- Master level

- PHD level

2. Years of experience in higher education.

- 1-5

- 6-10

- 11-15

- 16-20

- More than 20

3. Job title.

- Instructor

- Lecturer

4. Your campus: _____

Section 2:

5. Your students' level in English.

- A2

- B1

- B2

6. How many reading classes do you have a week per CRN?

- 1-2 classes

- 3-4 classes

- 5 classes

- Reading classes are usually mixed with another skill

7. How many writing classes do you have a week per CRN?

- 1-2 classes

- 3-4 classes

- 5 classes

- Writing classes are usually mixed with another skill

8. How do you usually teach reading? (Check all that apply).

- Students work independently.

- Students have partial assistance from the teacher.

- Students are fully dependent on the teacher.

- I use all of the above techniques

-

Other:

9. How do you usually teach writing? (Check all that apply).

- Students work independently.

- The students are given different types of writing activities.

- I use writing based on template technique.

- I use join writing in a group technique.

- I discuss the prompt with students as a kind of brainstorming, prepare a video that is related to the topic, make sure the students understand the prompt, and give feedback when they finish writing.

- I use all of the above techniques.

-

Other:

10. Do you think giving equal attention to reading and writing classes would affect students' writing skills?

- Yes

- No

-

Other:

11. What kind of problems would your students face in writing classes? (Check all that apply).

- Appropriate knowledge of academic writing skills.

- Grammar skills.

- Motivation problems.

- Interest in the topic.

- Language of instruction (English).

- Sentence structure.

-

Other:

12. What kind of problems would your students face in reading classes? (Check all that apply).

- Poor comprehension skills.

- Issues with Decoding.

- Learning disability.

-

Other:

13. In writing classes, how do your students prefer to work?

- Individually

- In groups

- Pair work

14. Do you follow a rubric when you grade your students' essays?

- Yes

- No

- Sometimes

15. Do you follow a lesson plan for teaching writing?

- Yes

- No

- Sometimes

16. Do you follow a lesson plan for teaching reading?

- Yes

- No

- Sometimes

17. Does the method you use in teaching reading attract your students' attention?

- Yes

- No

- Sometimes

18. Does the method you use in teaching writing attract your students' attention?

- Yes

- No

- Sometimes

19. Please, indicate the aspects that reflect how you can perceive your students' improvement in writing skills. (Check all that apply).

- Control over grammar.
- Appropriate use of vocabulary.
- Awareness of text organization. Clarity in the use of connectors.
- Attention to mechanics and punctuation.

20. Please indicate the aspects related to the writing process that may have helped your students improve their writing skills in English. (Check all that apply).

- Exposure to models of good writing.
- Guidance from the teacher.
- Feedback from the teacher.
- Feedback from classmates.

Section 3:

21. Students should be assigned some reading texts to be done as homework.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

22. Students should be given writing exercises as homework.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree

- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

23. I encourage my students to critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.

- Never
- Occasionally
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

24. I encourage my students to reflect on important information in the reading texts.

- Never
- Occasionally
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

25. I encourage my students to use reference materials such as dictionaries to help them understand what they read.

- Never
- Occasionally
- Sometimes
- Often

- Always

26. I encourage my students to paraphrase to better understand what they read.

- Never

- Occasionally

- Sometimes

- Often

- Always

27. I encourage my students to go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.

- Never

- Occasionally

- Sometimes

- Often

- Always

28. I know my students' strengths and weaknesses.

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Neutral

- Agree

- Strongly agree

Section 4:

29. How do you motivate your students to produce a good piece of writing?
30. In your opinion, what reading skills can help improve students' writing skills?
31. How do you characterize unsatisfactory essays?

Thank you!

Appendix (5): A sample of interview transcripts

Speaker 1:

Okay, the interview is being recorded now. I will open the questions document. Yeah. Let's start with this question. What is the level of your students in English?

Speaker 2:

Our students' level varies. We do actually have some fairly high-level students that speak, read, and write English rather well, but mostly our students' level is fairly weak. A lot of students struggle with writing, and some students arrive at the college with very little English, even spoken English. So, I would say, in general, the level is fairly low. But we do have exceptions to that, obviously.

Speaker 1:

Do you balance teaching reading and writing?

Speaker 2:

Sorry, do I have?

Speaker 1:

Do you balance teaching reading and writing?

Speaker 2:

We follow a curriculum that dictates to us what we should do, more or less. We can vary from that. There are quite a few reading activities and writing activities. Teachers can decide

themselves whether they want to follow the curriculum 100 %, or whether they want to focus on something. So, I would say it's up to the individual teacher. Myself, I do teach a couple of classes as well. I would say I focus more on reading than I do on writing, too.

Speaker 2:

Point here? It's more because the students that I have don't really like writing. And they're inclined to, when we do something, they feel like, oh, I've finished, I'm done. And they don't like to revisit a writing, and if I've graded it and corrected it and said, Now, let's go and redo this, let's rewrite that. That was only a first draft. That doesn't work very well yet. They're inclined to think I'm done. I did it. Sorry, it was done done. You know, finished class. I'm not doing that again. So that's the attitude quite often, unfortunately. It's something we need to work on from when they're very young. So, we're trying. We are trying to change, but with the older students, it's difficult. So that's a problem that we have, that I have.

Speaker 1:

How many reading classes do you have a week?

Speaker 2:

Reading classes? No, we don't have reading classes as such.

Speaker 1

What do you mean? Do you mix it with another skill?

Speaker 2

It's all mixed. Yes, the skills are generally mixed. Like I said, we generally follow a textbook. There are readings in it almost every day. So, there might be a paragraph we have to read and odd questions we have to answer, but it might be combined with grammar exercises and a writing exercise. So, it's mixed.

Speaker 1:

How about writing? Is it also mixed with other skills?

Speaker 2:

It's all mixed, although, because writing takes a lot longer, you might be inclined to say, Okay, there's this writing exercise we have to do. Let's use a whole period for it, or even two periods for it. So that would be slightly different.

Speaker 1:

What skill do you mix it with writing?

Speaker 2:

It would probably be with reading.

Speaker 1:

Reading? Because, for example, in my classes, one time I used video record. Yeah. Okay. Is there a plan for each writing lesson?

Speaker 2:

Sure. Absolutely. We're in a system where we have to have lesson plans for every single lesson. So, we plan everything that we do. We have to.

Speaker 1:

Do you have a written plan or just you keep this in your mind?

Speaker 2:

No, we have written plans.

Speaker 1:

Okay. How do you usually teach writing?

Speaker 2:

Generally speaking, I obviously have different methods of teaching writing, but quite more often than not, I would use a prompt. With the younger students, I teach both Foundation students and Diploma students. So, with the Diploma students, their abilities are quite weak. So I might model something for them, and I might write it with them. I'll write it on the whiteboard. I'm using my computer. And the weaker students, I'll have them at the beginning of the year, they might even just be copying it. And then I'll ask them to please try and change it slightly. With the slightly higher levels of the students (Foundation students), I will ask them to write it themselves. But again, we are in a culture where they love to copy. So that's what I try to do. And I try to win them off copying me and doing what I do. The Foundation students it's a little bit different. I would give them a prompt, discuss the topic, and ask them to do some research into the topic and then to write the essay.

Speaker 1:

Do they do it independently?

Speaker 2:

It is independently. They do it independently. Although recently with AI, we found quite a lot of students simply punch into chat GPT. That writes an essay for them. So, this is a problem we have right now, and we're trying to work around that, trying to figure out how do we use this new artificial intelligence to enhance our lessons and to enhance their writing rather than just say, No, you can't use it because you're going to cheat with it, blah, blah, blah. So, we tried to find it's all new. We tried to find our way around it. So that's where we're right now.

Speaker 1:

Okay. You told me you sometimes or usually integrate reading with writing, right? Yes. Yeah. What is the purpose of such integration?

Speaker 2:

Well, it could be as simple as the topic that I've chosen for them to write on happens to be attached to a reading first. So, then they can use the reading to get an idea about what the topic is and what to write about. So, it might just be a great model for them to look at and to see a lot

of information about the chosen topic. If I choose the topic myself, it's almost always out of the readings that we do. Because, again, we're in a system where we have exams, and the exams are set on those topics. So, I want to make sure that my students have the necessary vocabulary and knowledge to be able to write about those topics in the exam, if that question comes up in the exam papers, because we have reading and writing exams. That's pretty important.

Speaker 1:

Do you think the balance in teaching reading and writing would affect students' writing skills?

Speaker 2:

I think, the balance?

Speaker 1:

Yeah.

Speaker 2:

Yes. Obviously, if you didn't focus enough on writing and you focused too much on reading, you are going to land in a situation where they have weaker writing skills. So, the more you focus on one thing, the better they need to be at it. So again, in a system like ours, we are results driven and we know what's important. We know that they have a writing exam, and it counts 40 %. We know that the reading exam counts 60 %. So do the math yourself. What are we going to focus slightly more on? We're going to focus slightly more on reading because it's more important than writing. So, there is that to be said as well. I think you should probably try to balance.

Speaker 1:

Did you participate in designing the material for a course?

Speaker 2:

I have some small courses, not a major whole year curriculum for a course. No. I've been involved in different things over the years where I've had to teach a different or something like

that, and I've had to create the materials myself. So, I could say, yes, but I'm not sure if it's what you're talking about. I'm not sure.

Speaker 1:

Whenever you want to create or write a material for your courses, what consideration do you keep in your mind before designing, before working on this material?

Speaker 2:

Well, of course, the level of the students. You obviously have to be culturally sensitive as well. So, the materials you use, you have to check and make sure that they are relevant to where we are. You have to make sure that the level is relevant to the students. It's pointless asking students a question which they can't understand.

Speaker 2:

So that's terribly important. Nothing else comes to mind right now. I think those are the most important points I can think of right now.

Speaker 1:

How about having a balanced material? Did you have this in mind?

Speaker 2

What do you mean balanced?

Speaker 1:

Balanced means not focusing on one skill. It means dealing with the language skills as a whole system.

Speaker 2:

I was thinking when you asked the question more about setting a specific question for that to do. If you mean setting something like if I was teaching the course I previously mentioned, which I have done, and I had to have materials... No, I didn't really think about that, to be honest.

Well, because it was a one-semester course, it wasn't. It was a course that would last ten or eleven weeks. It was meant to be fun.

Speaker 1:

You wanted to make it very interesting, didn't you?

Speaker 2:

I wanted to try and make it interesting. I also didn't really know the level of the students that would be attending. That happens, unfortunately. So sometimes you're preparing all this material and you're thinking it's going to be for intermediate students, and A1 and A2 students turn up. So that's happened to me, to be honest with you. So, then you have to adapt things very, very fast. So, another thing, you have to be in a system that is extremely adaptable.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. Okay, I understand it. What problems do your students have in writing?

Speaker 2:

Grammar. Grammar would be a major problem they have in writing. Another problem that they have right now is we're completely digital. Our students all have iPads and laptops. And we're actually a paperless campus, supposedly. And we don't write things very often. The problem with that is that the exam (EmSAT) comes from MoE, which is the educational department of the government. And some of them are written. So, we have a situation where we... We're working on this, by the way, but we had a situation where we would have a written exam where they'd have to write an essay on paper, yet they've been practicing, and they've been working in the program the whole year writing on their iPad and on computers. So, this is a big problem because I thought, well, this is really unfair. These children can't write. Some of them really can't write very well, and they haven't been practicing. So, this was the situation a couple of years ago. So, we were very quick to realize, Okay, we need to start practicing. We need to at least sometimes have them sit and write with paper because it's not fair. It's really not fair to suddenly have an exam that's all written and they haven't been practicing.

Speaker 2:

And they can't even write in cursive. They write their print. It's a whole debate where they... We teachers are talking about it now. Do they really have to be able to write anymore? Because the world is changing. Everything's online now. Everything's on computers. We're at this stage right now where we're somewhere in the middle. So, we have to prepare them for both. So that is a big problem and it's a challenge. And it's something we're working on as teachers in my particular campus. So, I'd say that's definitely a problem. Grammar is a huge problem. Another problem that I have is it's part of grammar, I guess. But for example, a lot of the students, because they're Arabic speaking, are inclined to follow Arabic grammar patterns. So, for example, you'll even have students at high levels writing this long, never-ending paragraph. It's a long sentence full of commas and very little punctuation. Instead of full stops and shorter sentences. So that's a very common mistake. Another thing that I loathe, but it happens all the time, is when they talk about the "I". It's a small "I". And it's like, oh, no, no, we never... It's always a big "I".

Speaker 2:

It's always a big "I". Always a capital I. That's just a pet hate of mine personally. But you'll be surprised how many students, even at the higher levels, are still doing that. And I feel that it must come from Arabic. It must be something that they've learned somewhere else, and they do this. Those are very common problems that we have. Spelling less so, oddly enough, I find that's okay. And then, of course, just handwriting, like I said to you earlier. Just common handwriting. It's another look at some students and you'll be surprised, and you'll think, well, this must be a five year old. And you realize, no, but this is somebody that's 17, 18 years old, which they just haven't had a chance to write by hand. I must say there's a big difference between the boys and the girls.

Speaker 1:

Really? Do you teach both?

Speaker 2:

I know. I teach the boys, but as a lead teacher, I'm involved with overseeing what happens on the girl's side.

Speaker 1:

What is the difference? Tell me.

Speaker 2

There's a massive difference in level. The girls... Who is better? The girls, by far. Years ahead. Yes, quite often the girls' writing is actually fairly super. They can often write in cursive and write beautifully. They seem to be much better students. The boys, it's more what I've been talking about is those are the people that I teach. So, there is a difference so much. Definitely a big difference.

Speaker 1:

Do you give writing tasks as homework?

Speaker 2:

For sure, we have to.

Speaker 1:

Okay. While doing these tasks, what challenges do they face?

Speaker 2:

What challenges do they face? I suppose they would face the challenge of not having somebody there to help them. A lot of my students are very used to having somebody around them all the time ask questions and receive help all the time. They're not always particularly good at independent work. That's why we give them homework to try and foster this and try to make them improve in that. With that said, a lot of my students also have private tutors at home. It's quite common as well. It's pretty normal. So, they can get help, but the help isn't always good help. It doesn't mean we said, put a private tutor at home, that that private tutor is good at English. In fact, quite often it's the opposite. So that's another challenge that we have, did you

write this yourself, or did your tutor write it for you? So, I think that challenges like that. But of course, challenges with grammar, challenges with understanding what the prompt is, we have that as well. So again, a lot of our students are very used to being able to ask questions and are very used to people doing everything for them.

Speaker 2:

It's something which we try really hard to...

Speaker 1:

Yeah. I totally agree with you. Do you think there is a need to give the English teachers in general, a PD session about implementing a balance in reading and writing teaching?

Speaker 2:

In a PD session, professional development? Yeah. Absolutely. Professional development is always good in any way, shape, or form. I think that anything that could improve our practice would be a good thing. Absolutely. As the person in charge of PD on campus, I would say absolutely yes, definitely.

Speaker 1:

Good. Do you think one session will be enough or they will need more than one?

Speaker 2:

I would think that it's actually a big thing this. It should be an ongoing thing and it should be an ongoing thing, especially in, let's say, the English and Arabic departments where they're working with reading and writing. It's not something that you can do once and suddenly learn that and now that's what you're going to do for the rest of your life. It's probably something we should revisit from time to time.

Speaker 1:

Last question? Do you think you can give a PD session to your colleagues about how to implement a balance in teaching reading and writing?

Speaker 2:

I would like to say I probably could. I wouldn't say I would be ready right now. I would have to go and do some research and some homework. But in our system, on our campus, professional development is a big thing. And we do have it several times a year. And we have weeklong sessions. And I'm very well-versed in it because I'm the person who designs it usually. So, we are all very well-versed in being given a topic and being told, please prepare a PD session on this for the teachers, or for your department, or whatever. And as a lead teacher for the Foundation Program, sure, I have to do things like that all the time. So yes, I could. I would have to do some research, make it interesting, but sure I could.

Speaker 1:

Thank you very much. This is the end of our interview. I will stop recording.