

EFFECTIVE TEACHERS OF ACADEMIC WRITING IN AN EFL CONTEXT:
STUDENTS AND TEACHERS BELIEFS

by

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Abstract

In the field on EFL academic writing, the teacher plays a pivotal role in the success of the learning process. This research aimed at investigating the characteristics that constitute an effective academic writing instructor, as perceived by EFL Arab students and their instructors. Questionnaires and follow-up interviews were used to discover the beliefs of students and instructors regarding the characteristics of effective academic writing instructors at AUS, in the UAE. Although the small number of instructor respondents did not allow for comparing and contrasting the beliefs of the students with their instructors, it was clear from the findings that there are some variations in the way students and their instructors perceive effective teachers of academic writing. Both students and instructors valued characteristics such as teacher friendliness, patience, and helpfulness, but to varying degrees. However, the students and instructors had different beliefs about characteristics related to teaching. Moreover, two-proportion tests revealed that the response selection tendency of the students was affected by two variables: gender and high school curriculum.

Search Terms: teacher effectiveness, EFL academic writing, students' beliefs, teachers' beliefs, Arab students, higher education.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

This chapter introduces the research problem, research questions, the significance of the study, and concludes with an overview of the chapters. The statement of the problem reflects the challenges encountered by young adult Arab learners in the academic writing context at the university level, and stresses the importance of the role of English as a foreign language (EFL) academic writing teachers in the success of the learning process. The investigation of the role of EFL academic writing teachers is situated within teacher effectiveness research which places teachers' and students' beliefs at the heart of this investigation. Following this argument, the chapter presents the main research questions. The significance of the research is examined in the light of three main dimensions: improving the quality of teaching, developing teacher evaluation criteria, and designing teacher education programs. This chapter finally concludes with an overview of the chapters.

Statement of the problem

In the EFL field, there are countless studies that attempt to identify and prescribe successful pedagogical practices and teaching methodologies. It is undeniable that such studies offer valuable contributions to the field. However, focusing on teaching methodologies solely, in a decontextualized manner, neglects other dimensions of the learning process, namely the teacher's role. In fact, teachers play a pivotal role in facilitating the learning process which influences students' performance. As Stronge (2007) expresses it, "teachers have a powerful, long-lasting influence on their students. They directly affect how students learn, what they learn, how much they learn, and the ways they interact with one another and the world around them" (p. ix). Stronge's argument not only applies to general education, but it also applies to other fields, like EFL. Successful EFL teachers facilitate language acquisition and cater to students' needs and expectations. Young adult learners, especially in universities, encounter different pedagogical approaches and, consequently, that might influence their needs and expectations.

At the university level, academic writing is an indispensable constituent of academic success. Academic writing is crucial for students' educational development

in higher education, especially in Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) pedagogy wherein writing is situated in multiple contexts and disciplines across a university. Unfortunately, however, many students, especially those whose first language is Arabic, often have “difficulties with academic reading and writing in college introductory and advanced composition courses, where students are usually faced with a whole new set of demands, expectations, and competencies” (Al-Issa & Dahan, 2008, p. 17).

In the UAE, one of the universities that focuses on academic writing is the American University of Sharjah (AUS), which is an English medium university with an American curriculum. At AUS, based on the English placement test (EPT) results, students are placed in one of three academic writing courses: WRI 001 Fundamentals of Academic Discourse, WRI 101 Academic Writing I, and WRI 102 Academic Writing II. These courses are called introductory academic composition courses, and they are prerequisites for most content courses at AUS. The main aim of the introductory composition courses at AUS is to develop the literacy skills and competencies required for academic success, and they are taught by instructors from the Department of Writing Studies.

The role of EFL academic writing teachers constitutes an important component of the larger picture of the effectiveness of teaching, and the process of learning. Both teachers and their students have their own beliefs about what constitutes an effective teacher and teaching of academic writing. At the heart of teacher effectiveness research lies the concept of beliefs which refers to cognitive propositions that are held as truths and affect thought and behavior of their holders (Borg, 2001). Teachers and students might share commonalities or exhibit discrepancies in regard with their beliefs about the qualities of effective teachers of EFL academic writing. However, it is often assumed by teachers that their students have the same beliefs or views about teaching as their own beliefs.

No matter how good the intentions of teachers are, these confident assumptions about shared views may lead to miscommunication gaps between teachers and students. As Brown (2009) stresses, “teachers and their students may have very similar or disparate notions of effective teaching, and the intersection of the two belief systems has ramifications for students' language learning and the

effectiveness of instruction” (p. 46). Thus this study aims to investigate the qualities of effective EFL academic writing teachers as perceived by EFL Arab students and their teachers, from the holistic perspective employed by research in teacher effectiveness, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Research Questions

This study is unique in that it will investigate, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the beliefs of EFL Arab students and their instructors regarding the qualities that make an effective academic writing teacher at AUS. In particular, it will address the following questions:

1. What are the beliefs of EFL Arab students about the characteristics of effective instructors of academic writing?
2. What are the beliefs of academic writing instructors about the characteristics of effective teachers of academic writing in an EFL context?
3. What are the variables that most affect Arab students’ beliefs and perceptions about academic writing teacher effectiveness?

Significance of the study

The significance of this study resides in the valuable implications of research in teacher effectiveness, in addition to the study’s attempt to fill a gap in the current literature. Research in teacher effectiveness is, mainly, motivated by the desire to improve teaching quality, develop teacher assessment and evaluation criteria and design meaningful teacher education curricula. Discipline shapes the characteristics of teachers who teach the discipline and the common practices they share in that subject (Borg, 2006). As Brosh (1996) states “the more we know about ELT characteristics, the more likely we are to develop language teacher preparation models that incorporate aspects of relevant language teaching as well as help in establishing standards for evaluating language instruction” (p. 125). Teaching is, to a great extent, a contextualized experience. Investigating the beliefs of teachers and students in regard with effective teaching of academic writing in a certain context can be used to improve the quality of teaching in that particular context. Moreover, a contextualized investigation of the qualities of effective EFL academic writing teachers might help

establish better and more relevant teacher evaluation criterion. Investigating and comparing the points of commonalities and/or discrepancies between teachers' beliefs of effective teaching of EFL academic writing and their students' beliefs can provide valuable and practical insights into the field of EFL academic writing, especially in a context like the UAE, where students face many challenges in their academic writing skills. Finally, understanding the qualities of effective EFL writing teachers might lead to incorporating these qualities in teacher preparation programs. Despite the valuable insights and the possible implications of research in the field of EFL effectiveness, it has not been adequately explored.

Structure of the study

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework of this research by reviewing the relevant literature on three main areas of research: teacher effectiveness, academic writing, and the concept of beliefs in EFL research. Within this framework, the role of the academic writing teachers is explored.

In chapter 3, the methodology is discussed in details, including the research context, the participants, the design of the research instruments, and the process of data analysis.

Chapter 4 reports on the findings of this research from the analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data. The data analysis is based on two types of analyses: within-categories analysis, and between-categories analysis. The quantitative data obtained from both students and instructors is represented in descriptive statistics. The data elicited from the semi-structured interviews is used to provide in-depth insights into the quantitative findings. Next, the independent variables are investigated through the use of two-proportion tests.

Finally, the conclusion is drawn in chapter 5, along with the limitations, implications and recommendations of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the past 50 years, teacher effectiveness has been a topic of research and discussion within the academic community. Research in teacher effectiveness is situated within an intricate and interdisciplinary matrix of concepts and theories. Perhaps this complexity can be attributed to the field's attempt to encompass, in a general manner, a holistic understanding of the characteristics or qualities of effective teachers. Regardless of such complexity, research in teacher effectiveness has a long history, and an increased interest in the recent years. Because this research aimed at gaining a better understanding of students' and teachers' beliefs about the effective characteristics in EFL academic writing teachers, the theoretical framework is based on two areas of literature: a) studies of the qualities of effective EFL teachers and b) research on EFL academic writing.

Research in Teacher Effectiveness

The quest to identify the qualities of effective teachers has long been targeted in history. The earliest accounts of the attributes of effective teachers can be traced back to Plato's dialogues with his great teacher Socrates. In his account, Plato discusses Socrates' highly effective teaching method known as Socratic dialogue (Knezica, Wubbelsb, Elbersb, & Hajeraby, 2010). In 1896, Putnam identified, "three necessary things to the greatest efficiency of the work of the teacher" which he lists as: knowledge of subject, knowledge of teaching methods and a genuine personality (Putnam, 1896, p. 254). The extensive research into teacher effectiveness that followed, since 1970s, has transformed Putnam's (1896), "three necessary things" into various well-established categories of attributes and qualities that characterize effective teachers.

After an extensive review of teacher effectiveness research, Murray (1991) concluded that there are three dimensions of general teacher behaviors that strongly emerged in most of the scholarship, namely, enthusiasm/expressiveness, clarity of instruction, and rapport/interaction. Later, Faranda and Clarke's (2004) investigated the general qualities of excellent instructors in higher education and they found that there are five main categories: rapport, delivery, fairness, knowledge and credibility, and organization and preparation. These categories describe some of the general qualities that are likely to be shared by most teachers, regardless of the discipline.

The field of teacher effectiveness draws a distinction between the general characteristics that constitute effective teachers, and the discipline-specific characteristics. The former includes attributes that are associated with teachers in general, while the latter aims at identifying the discipline-specific characteristics. The discipline-specific characteristics vary depending on the teaching context and its specific features (Bell, 2005). Stemming from Brosh's (1996) belief that, "every teaching-learning situation is unique," she identifies in her study the desirable characteristics of effective teachers in language teaching situations, as perceived by teachers and students (p. 125). The characteristics in Brosh's study include teacher's knowledge of the target language, ability to deliver content in organized and clear ways, and the ability to motivate students and sustain their interest.

In the same vein, Bell (2005) surveyed the perceptions of foreign language teachers in the USA concerning teaching behaviors and attitudes that contribute to effective foreign language teaching and learning. Her findings revealed that teachers agreed on areas such as qualifications of foreign language teachers, the importance of small group work, and negotiation of meaning, while they shared less agreement on error correction, focus on grammatical form, and individual differences of foreign language learners. Therefore, as Bell (2005) stresses, further research in this area is always encouraged, and she concluded that, "a study that would compare and match teacher and student belief systems would be another step in explaining effective foreign language teaching behaviors" (p. 267).

In an exploratory study, Brown (2009) took a step further and compared the beliefs of 49 university L2 teachers with the beliefs of 1600 of their students about several areas of FL pedagogy. His findings revealed significant discrepancies between teachers' and students' beliefs in regard to areas such as target language use, error correction, and group work. Similar to Bell (2005), Brown (2009) concluded that:

the assessment of teachers' and students' perceptions of L2 teaching is an area that researchers should continue to pursue because L2 teaching practices will change over time and idiosyncratic perceptions of it among teachers and students will remain a reality in the L2 classroom. (p. 57).

So, pursuing research in EFL teacher effectiveness is instrumental for understanding the development of teaching practices, especially in their contextual backgrounds.

In Iran, Shishavan and Sadeghi (2009) investigated the beliefs of 59 English teachers and 215 of their Persian students in regard to the qualities of effective English language teachers (EELT). Their quantitative results showed that there is, “significant differences between teachers’ and learners’ views on some characteristics of EELT” such as assigning homework, integrating group activities in the classroom, and speaking the learners’ first language (p. 130). Another quantitative study by Taqi, Al-Nouh and Akbar (2014) explored the uniqueness and characteristics of effective teachers of English as perceived by 150 undergraduates in Kuwait. Interestingly, their study revealed significant differences between high achievers, who chose English proficiency as the most important characteristic, and low achievers, who put more value on teachers’ socio-affective skills.

Affective attributes or behaviors are among the most frequently reported characteristics of effective teachers, in general education (Stronge, 2007), disciplinary teaching (Faranda & Clarke, 2004) and EFL-specific contexts (Brosh, 1996). After interviewing a number of EFL teacher trainers, teachers, and students, Eken (2007) explained that, “although on their own these qualities [affective] and skills cannot promote effective teaching, without them teaching cannot be effective either” (p. 172).

The qualitative data in Shishavan and Sadeghi (2009) provided in-depth understanding of the influence of teachers’ affective attributes as perceived by students. This influence, which can be lifelong, is significantly evident in the following response made by one of the participants:

A teacher’s personality is very important and could influence their efficacy a lot. When I was in high school I had an English teacher who was very knowledgeable as well kind and caring about her students. She was loved by her students and everybody was learning her lessons well. She had such a good personality that I always wished to be a teacher like her. So, I made her a role model for myself and came to university to study English (Shishavan and Sadeghi, 2009, p. 135).

Collectively, the studies mentioned above outline the general characteristics of research in EFL teacher effectiveness. Although these studies bring valuable insights

into EFL teacher effectiveness research, they have few limitations that need to be highlighted.

All of the studies mentioned above has focused on the characteristics of the general EFL teacher. The studies did not take the research of teacher effectiveness to further specific contexts, such as the EFL academic writing field. Second, most of these studies conducted questionnaire research that utilized quantitative methods to explore teachers' and students' beliefs. Such research would be enriched by studies that implement qualitative methodology because, as Bell (2005) asserts, "a follow-up interview with some of the respondents would shed light on questionnaire responses" (P. 267). Moreover, some researchers (Horwitz, 1990; Kern, 1995; Schulz, 1996; Brown, 2009) reported that the area lacks in studies that juxtapose the two beliefs systems in search of similarities and/or mismatches.

In short, research in teacher effectiveness has made many valuable contributions to provide deeper understanding of the qualities that contribute to effective teaching. In addition to the general effective teacher qualities, such as fairness, flexibility, and affective attributes, there are discipline-specific characteristics. Drawing on research in EFL academic writing, the next section discusses some of these characteristics that can be attributed to the EFL academic writing context.

Academic Writing Research

While the work on teacher effectiveness discussed above provides the main theoretical motivation for this study, research on academic writing is also relevant in highlighting how the characteristics of academic writing teachers have been conceptualized. The research on EFL academic writing is abundant. Despite this abundance, or maybe because of it, the literature does not offer a single approach to effective EFL academic writing. Bell (2005) argues that, "because every teaching and learning situation is context specific and because disciplines differ, some teaching behaviors and attitudes are considered more relevant in one discipline than in another" (p. 259). An essential question to ask here is: what are the behaviors and attributes that are considered more relevant to the teaching of academic writing in EFL higher education contexts? The answer to this question is neither simple nor straightforward.

Generally, Hyland (2003) draws some fundamental guidelines to effective teaching of L2 writing:

Fundamentally, writing is learned, rather than taught, and the teacher's best methods are flexibility and support. This means responding to the specific instructional context, particularly the age, first language and experience of the students, their writing purposes, and their target writing communities, and providing extensive encouragement in the form of meaningful contexts, peer involvement, prior texts, useful feedback and guidance in the writing process. (Hyland, 2003, p. 78).

Thus being flexible and supportive are two of the most appreciated characteristics of L2 writing teachers. According to Hyland (2003), flexibility is the ability to adapt to the requirements of a certain educational context. This means that teachers should pay attention to significant factors like students' age, level and first language. In most cases, EFL students in schools practice controlled and guided writing, in which teachers provide models and explicit instructions, whereas in academic settings students are expected to produce complex and high quality compositions. Moreover, in English medium universities, students are expected to write complex English compositions in their disciplinary areas. The pedagogical transition which students experience when they enter academic contexts, exposes them to, "a new discourse community, with a whole new set of rules, conventions, and expectations for generating and exchanging information" (Williams, 2005, p. 14). Academic writing is a challenge for many L1 writers, and it is usually very challenging for foreign language writers. The role of academic writing teachers is to support and prepare their students to overcome this challenge.

Supportive teachers create encouraging environments in which students receive adequate help and useful feedback. Support in academic writing classes can take many forms, and it can occur in the early stages of generating ideas for essays, and in the final stages of editing the written products. One of the most difficult tasks in writing is getting started. In academic writing, this step could be achieved by assigning pair and group work, which allows students to negotiate information and ask for clarifications (Hedge, 2000). Peer reviews are viewed as one of the cornerstones of modern academic writing classes because they help students to

develop a sense of audience and increase the chances of constructive feedback. In the literature, the use of peer reviews is supported by a plethora of studies that advocate their communicative potentials and efficiency. However, not all students agree on the effectiveness of peer reviews. There are many factors that contribute to shaping students' perceptions of peer reviews. For example, students might perceive the feedback of their peers as less accurate and less helpful than teacher feedback (Rollinson, 2005). As a consequence, it is crucial to establish a deep understanding of students' perceptions of peer reviews, and to use a variety of supportive methods.

Supporting students' academic writing can be maintained by providing students with opportunities to experiment and discover through a multiple drafts approach (Craig, 2013). Starting from 1970s, the focus of teaching writing shifted to the writing process. Before this radical change in writing pedagogy, writing was viewed as a "process of translating preconceived ideas into words according to a set of prescriptive rules about the form of effective text" (Galbraith & Rijlaarsdam, 1999, p. 93). Conversely, the process-oriented pedagogy acknowledges that writing is an exploratory and recursive rather than linear process (Williams, 2005). Although academic writing teachers usually perceive multiple drafting as an effective writing method, Craig (2013) cautions that students might not appreciate the extra work of writing several drafts, or that they might find the multiple drafts approach unusual, if they are used to producing short assignments in schools. Matsuda and Cox (2011) suggest that teachers should suspend judgments about errors in students' drafts, and focus on meaning negotiation instead. Craig (2013) advocates teacher-student conferencing as an effective method for responding to students' drafts because it increases chances of meaning negotiation (macro-level errors) and builds rapport between students and teachers.

Providing feedback on writing assignments is probably the most important part of the role of academic writing teachers. Both teachers and students have their own perceptions of what constitute effective feedback. It is often assumed that students expect and appreciate feedback on their writing from their teachers. However, Ferris (2011) points to the dilemma of students' views of error treatment in writing classes in the literature. Researchers who argue for error treatment express their concerns that "the absence of such feedback could raise student anxiety, increase student frustrations, and cause students to lose confidence in their teachers," while

others argue that “excessive attention to student errors may be offensive and demotivating to student writers... and it deflects teacher and student time and attention away from more important aspects of writing” (Ferris, 2011, p. 42). For example, Al-Issa and Abou Eissa (2011) examined the attitudes of 51 secondary English teachers in UAE schools towards writing assessment and feedback. The findings showed that the majority of the participants “paid equal attention to all writing errors, ...underlined and corrected all of them, in particular the grammatical and lexical errors” (p. 175). The perceptions of students and teachers regarding the effectiveness of error treatment might be discrepant.

Defining the effective academic writing teacher is not a simple task because there is not a clear cut recipe for effective teaching of academic writing. The literature offers broad guidelines for academic writing teachers such as providing opportunities for pair involvement and offering useful feedback on students’ writing. Nonetheless, the literature reveals that there are many variations, or even disagreements, between the perceptions of teachers and students regarding effective teaching of academic writing. From such discrepancies stems the need to investigate teachers and students’ perceptions of effective academic writing teachers.

Students’ and teachers’ Beliefs

Previous to 1970s, the predominant view was that learning is the product of teaching, and the focus was primarily on teaching methodology. Research in cognitive psychology highlighted two previously ignored areas: “understanding teachers required an understanding of teachers’ mental lives rather than exclusive focus on observable behaviors,” and “teachers played a much more active and central role in shaping educational processes than previously acknowledged” (Borg, 2006, p. 6). The concept of beliefs became central to the entire discipline of EFL teacher effectiveness. Researchers in teacher effectiveness have explored the qualities of effective teachers as perceived by teachers (Bell, 2005; Taqi, Al-Nouh & Akbar, 2014), and learners (Lee, 2010; Barnes & Lock, 2010; Chen, 2012), or compared and contrasted both teachers’ and students’ beliefs (Brown, 2009; Shishavan & Sadeghi, 2009). With the increasing interest in establishing learner-centered pedagogies, there has been a significant increase in studies targeting teachers’ and students’ beliefs.

For some, the construct of beliefs is described as “messy” (Pajares, 1992, p. 307), or “notoriously difficult to define and evaluate” (Williams and Burden, 1997, p. 56). In some cases, beliefs have even been characterized as irrelevant and naïve; however, the role of students’ beliefs in learning success has witnessed a resurgence of research in the past few decades (Barcelos, 2003). The dismissal of beliefs as untrue or wrong constructs was criticized by Riley (1997), who made the point that beliefs can be considered as students’ truths, or in other words, their notions of identity that affect their learning experience. Similarly, White (2008) asserted that, “beliefs are important because learners hold their beliefs to be true and these beliefs then guide how they interpret their experiences and how they behave” (p. 121). Furthermore, individual teachers have their own beliefs systems. William and Burden (1997) stated that teachers’ beliefs, whether implicit or explicit, about learning, teaching, and learners have a profound effect on everything they do in the classroom “no matter what syllabus or coursebook they use” (p. 65).

In order to investigate instructors’ and students’ beliefs about the characteristics of effective academic writing instructors, it is necessary to formulate a working definition of beliefs. It is a challenge to formulate a comprehensive and simple definition of beliefs. Based on her review of the scholarship pertinent to the study of beliefs in SLA, Barcelos (2003) found that many elements influence the formulation of beliefs, including cognitive, social, and cultural. She concluded that beliefs are not only cognitive concepts that are accepted to be true by their holders, but also social constructs engendered by experience and interactions which are subject to change. This research builds on Barcelos’ (2003) conclusions, and consider beliefs as the knowledge that students and teachers possess about what constitute effective teaching of academic writing based on their own experiences and social interactions.

The importance of investigating beliefs is captured by Borg (2001) description of this concept as “evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behavior” (p. 186). According to this description, beliefs play a key role in guiding students’ and teachers’ behaviors in learning environments.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Context

This study is conducted at the American University of Sharjah (AUS) which is an independent coeducational university in the UAE catering to many nationalities. AUS is based upon American institutions of higher education that uses English as the medium of instruction. According to the latest statistics, the majority of the student population at AUS are Arabs, constituting approximately 62% of the total student population (Fast facts, Spring 2015). During Spring 2015, the top Arab student nationalities at AUS were: Emiratis (16%), Egyptians (13%), Jordanians (11%), Syrians (8%), Saudi Arabian (5%), Palestinian (5%), and Lebanese (4%) (Fast facts, Spring 2015). AUS undergraduates are distributed among four colleges/school, ordered by the highest enrolment rate: College of Engineering (CEN), School of Business Administration (SBA), the College of Arts and Science (CAS), and College of Architecture Art and Design (CAAD). All students majoring in any of these colleges/school are required to write complex essays across the curriculum, and take academic writing courses as part of their general education requirements.

Academic writing courses are divided into two major categories: introductory composition courses and advanced writing courses. The introductory composition courses are WRI 001, WRI 101, and WRI 102. According to the description in the WRI 001, WRI 101 and WRI 102 syllabus for the semester of Fall 2015, each of these courses has a focus: WRI 001 Fundamentals of Academic Discourse introduces the students to basic strategies for university success with particular emphasis on conventions of academic writing through reading and writing activities, WRI 101 Academic Writing I focuses on ways of writing, reading and critiquing academic essays, emphasizes rhetorical forms of analysis, argumentation, and critical thinking, and develops students' writing skills by emphasizing the writing process, peer reviews, and critical reading skills, and WRI 102 Academic Writing II introduces students to critical writing and research skills, focuses on building arguments using inductive and deductive reasoning and support strategies using basic academic research and library skills, and builds on critical thinking and reading skills developed in WRI 101. The three courses use the same textbooks, namely *Writing Spaces V. 1*, *Writing Spaces V. 2*, and *Writing Commons*.

These courses are taught by instructors in the Writing Studies Department who follow the pedagogical goals dictated by the curriculum; however, they have the freedom in choosing their teaching methodology and activities. In general, the teaching and learning methodology is student-centered aimed at promoting analytical and critical thinking and reading skills, peer reviews, and independent learning. The assessment tools used in these courses are various, including composing essays, readings, peer reviews, quizzes, midterms, and final exams. Thus the responsibility of an academic writing teacher of introductory compositions courses encompasses a variety of tasks, such as assigning readings, organizing peer reviews, assessing students' progress, providing feedback on students' work, and keeping track of attendance and participation.

Participants

The participants in this study are divided into two groups. The first group of participants includes undergraduates who are enrolled in one of the introductory academic composition courses considered for this study: WRI 101 and WRI 102. The initial intention was to include all three introductory composition courses (i.e. WRI 001, WRI 101, and WRI 102); however, WRI 001 was excluded in the data collection stage. The reasons for this exclusion are various. First, most likely, students in WRI 001 are not expected to have enough background information and experience about what constitutes effective academic writing teaching in higher education. Having such limited experience with academic writing teachers does not allow WRI 001 students to experience and compare different teaching environments, a practice that might influence how they create, maintain or change their beliefs about effective teaching of academic writing. There are, of course, some students in WRI 001 who fail and repeat the course, but repeating students do not constitute a significant percentage of the total students in WRI 001. It is worth noting here that some students are placed directly in WRI 101 or WRI 102 based on a writing placement test. Thus a question is added to the demographic section of the questionnaire (i.e. Question 8) to signal this as an independent variable (see Appendix A). In general, compared to WRI 001, the number of students who take WRI 101 or WRI 102 as their first introductory composition course is smaller. Second, towards the end of the course, students in WRI 001 might develop insights or beliefs about effective teaching of academic writing,

but time restrictions in the schedule of this study did not allow for such delay in the data collection stage. Third, the methodology utilizes convenience sampling, consequently, few of the contacted writing instructors (those who were willing to devote some of their class time for data collection) taught WRI 001 classes in the semester of Fall 2015. The second group includes academic writing instructors in the Writing Department at AUS. Below is a detailed description of the characteristics of the participants in each group and their selection criteria.

Student Questionnaire Respondents. AUS encompasses a rich and diverse body of students in terms of cultures and nationalities. This diversity entails a multilingual context that consists of native and nonnative speakers of English. The majority of nonnative English speakers at AUS come from Arabic backgrounds. In this study, the participants include only Arab students whose first language is Arabic. By addressing Arab students, the study covers a wide range of the students' population, and it investigates the perceptions of a group that has been previously neglected in the field of teacher effectiveness research. In total, 259 Arab students, enrolled in WRI 101 and WRI 102, participated in this study. Table 1 shows the course distribution of the student respondents.

Table 1. *Course Distribution of Respondents*

Current Writing Course	Number of respondents	Percentage
WRI 101	135	52.1 %
WRI 102	124	47.9 %

The demographic section of the questionnaire revealed information about the student respondents, including age, gender, college, GPA, type of high school curriculum, and writing courses taken previously. As Table 2 shows, the majority of the student respondents were between 17 and 20 years old, with few respondents older than 20. The percentage of the female respondents was higher than the males. The highest percentage of the student respondents came from CEN, followed by SBA, then CAS and CAAD. A significant number of them left the GPA item unspecified. This can be attributed to the reason that the majority of these respondents were first year students and consequently their GPA is unknown to them yet. In regard to the high school curriculum, the majority of them studied in English curriculum schools (70.7 %), while only 28.2 percent studied in Arabic curriculum schools. Out of 259

respondents, 100 (38.6%) have not taken any writing courses previously. The rest of the respondents varied in the experience they gained from previous writing courses, as Table 2 shows.

Table 2. *Demographic Information of Student Respondents*

Biographical information	Responses	Number of respondents	Percentage
Age	17 – 20	249	96.1%
	21 – 23	7	2.7 %
	+23	3	1.2 %
Gender	Female	135	52.1 %
	Male	124	47.9 %
College	CEN	137	52.9 %
	SBA	63	24.3 %
	CAS	34	13.1 %
	CAAD	25	9.7 %
GPA	3.50 – 4.00	23	8.9 %
	3.00 – 3.49	50	19.3 %
	2.50 – 2.99	52	20.1 %
	2.00 – 2.49	46	17.8 %
	Below 2.00	8	3.1 %
	Unknown	80	30.9 %
High School Curriculum	English	183	70.7 %
	Arabic	73	28.2 %
	Other	3*	1.2 %
Writing courses taken previously	WRI 001	32	12.4 %
	WRI 101	43	16.6 %
	WRI 001 + WRI 101	80	30.9 %
	WRI 001 + WRI 101 + WRI 102	3	1.2 %
	WRI 101 + WRI 102	1	0.4 %
	None	100	38.6 %

* 3 of these respondents had French/Arabic/English curriculum.

Student Interview Participants. In order to gain in-depth insights into the questionnaire responses, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 students. Table 3 presents the demographic information of the interviewees. The interviewed sample covered a range of demographic varieties in terms of gender, nationalities, GPA, high school curriculums, and previous and current experience with writing courses at AUS.

Table 3. *Demographic Information of Student Interview Participants*

Name*	Gender	College	Nationality	GPA	High School	Current Writing Course	Writing Courses Taken Previously
Maha	F	CAS	Emirati	2.00-2.49	Arabic	WRI 102	WRI 001 and WRI 101
Mariam	F	CAAD	Tunisian	3.00-3.49	French Arabic English	WRI 101	WRI 001
Mohammad	M	CEN	Syrian	3.50-4.00	Arabic	WRI 102	WRI 101
Ahmed	M	CEN	Egyptian	3.50-4.00	English	WRI 102	WRI 101
Alia	F	CAS	Emirati	3.50-4.00	English	WRI 102	WRI 101
Baaj	M	CEN	Jordanian	Unknown	English	WRI 101	WRI 001 WRI 101
Tawfik	M	CEN	Egyptian	3.00-3.49	English	WRI 102	WRI 101
Adel	M	CAS	Jordanian	-	English	WRI 101	WRI 001 WRI 101
Nour	F	CEN	Egyptian	Unknown	English	WRI 101	None
Abdulrahman	M	CEN	Egyptian	2.50-2.99	English	WRI 102	WRI 101
Meena	F	SBA	-	-	English	WRI 102	WRI 101

* All the names in the table are pseudonyms

Instructors. The participants in the instructors' group were academic writing instructors, both females and males, who came from different cultural and educational backgrounds. The minimum educational qualification held by the instructors is a Master's degree. There are 24 full-time instructors, and 3 adjunct instructors in the Writing Studies Department. Basically, all the instructors in the Writing Studies Department were targeted as potential participants; however, only 11 of them were willing to participate in this study. Table 4 shows the demographic description of the instructor respondents.

Table 4. *Demographic Information of Instructor Respondents*

Item Content	Responses	Number of respondents
Gender	Female	7
	Male	4
Highest qualification	MA	7
	PhD	4
Field of Specialty	Literature	4
	Language Education	1
	Applied Linguistics	2
	Writing Studies	1
	TESOL	2
	Other	1
Years of experience teaching academic writing	3 – 5	1
	6 – 10	2
	11 – 15	5
	+20	3

In the follow-up interviews, 5 instructors were interviewed. These interviews were essential to help provide in-depth analysis of their beliefs about the qualities of effective academic writing teachers.

Instruments

This study utilized two major data collection tools: questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. A questionnaire was developed to elicit what AUS undergraduates and their instructors perceive as the qualities of effective teachers of academic writing. The following sections discuss the process of designing the data collection tools, and the data collection and analysis procedures.

The Questionnaire. Academic writing is a vast area of research. After a thorough review of the literature on academic writing, it was concluded that there is no clear cut model for effective teaching of academic writing. At AUS, there are some guidelines for the introductory academic composition classes in regard to teaching methodologies, pedagogical goals and objectives, and assessment tools. Nevertheless, these guidelines are broad, and they do not represent the intricate specificities of composition classrooms or student-teacher interactions. Consequently, the researcher had to make sure that the instruments reflect the study’s context and that they are relevant and meaningful to the participants. For this reason, a questionnaire was

designed based on a preliminary investigation carried out by the researcher in Spring 2015 which helped to narrow down the focus and maximize the relevancy of the items in the questionnaire. The preliminary investigation depended on observation sessions and short semi-structure interviews with both the students and their instructors.

First, the researcher observed four instructors from a total of twenty classes (WRI 001, WRI 101, and WRI 102). Through observations, a list was generated which included some practices and behaviors that were common among these instructors. This list was taken as an indication of the average academic writing classroom at AUS. Second, short semi-structured interviews were conducted with a representative sample of the participants in this study. The sample consisted of two instructors from the Writing Department, and seven students who were enrolled in one of the introductory writing courses (WRI 101, and WRI 102). The interview questions sought the participants' beliefs regarding the best or worst qualities of an academic writing teacher. After conducting the interviews, their answers revealed the qualities of an effective or ineffective academic writing teacher. The questionnaire items were designed according to the findings of this preliminary investigation, in addition to the insights gleaned from the review of the literature (see Appendix A). The questionnaire consisted of 30 belief statements with which participants were asked to indicate their agreement along a 5-point Likert-scale.

One of the frequently reported limitations of close-ended questions in questionnaires is limiting the scope of the respondents' answers. Bell (2005) acknowledges this limitation in her study on the effective characteristics of EFL teachers, and explains that, "if the questionnaire had contained an open-ended component, respondents would have been able to express their opinions about particular items and explain why they agreed or disagreed with a certain behavior or attitude" (p. 267). Therefore, an open-ended question was added to the questionnaire allowing teachers and students to add more qualities, if they have any. The demographic section in the students' questionnaire was used to examine the findings of the study in the light of different students' independent variables such as gender and high school curriculum. On the other hand, the instructors' questionnaire included a different demographic section (see Appendix B).

The Interviews. Since this study aimed at investigating beliefs, qualitative methods, as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998), “can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions” (p. 11 cited in Faranda & Clarke, 2004). In order to get more in-depth data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a representative sample of the participants, including 11 students and 5 instructors. As Bell (2005) explains, “further studies on teacher beliefs should permit respondents to express their opinions about the content of individual items. A follow-up interview with some of the respondents would shed light on questionnaire responses” (Bell, 2005, p. 267). The purpose of the interviews was to offer the opportunity to gain novel understandings on the issues investigated in the questionnaire. Semi-structured interviews allow for more flexibility that is necessary to obtain intricate details about phenomena such as beliefs and perceptions.

The interview questions can be divided into general questions about the qualities of effective academic writing teachers, and questionnaire-specific questions (see Appendix C). The later type used the interviewee’s questionnaire responses to shed light on their own choices, in order to clarify their understanding of the questionnaire items and to further investigate their beliefs.

Procedures

Prior to implementing the research instruments, there are two preliminary procedures that were followed. First, since this research involves human subjects, an approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained. Second, in order to ensure that the items in the questionnaires are clear, they were piloted on individuals who were demographically comparable to the targeted population.

The pilot study was conducted prior to distributing the questionnaire to a large number of students in WRI 101 and WRI 102 classes. The pilot study sample consisted of 8 students from each course who were recruited through snowball sampling. In addition, two academic instructors from the Writing Studies Department were consulted on the belief statements in the questionnaire (section II). Based on this pilot study and the instructors’ advice, some changes were made on the format of the questionnaire and the wording of some of the belief statements. For example, the statement “conference with students” was changed to “regularly meet with students,

one on one,” and the statement “be precise and direct in feedback” was changed to “be precise and direct in providing feedback.”

After these two steps, the students’ questionnaire was revised and then administered in person, in hard copies. Twelve classes from WRI 101, and 11 classes from WRI 102 were chosen, based on convenience sampling. A number of instructors were contacted and asked for their approval to administer the questionnaire during their class time. All students, regardless of their nationalities, were asked to answer the questionnaire in class and return it before leaving the classroom. Communicating personally with students and asking them to complete the questionnaire in class increase rates of return. Each student participant signed a consent letter that indicated their responsibilities and rights. The consent letters were kept separate from the questionnaires, in order to prevent associating any questionnaire with a specific student, and to make students more comfortable about the confidentiality of their identities. After conducting the questionnaires, completed surveys were sorted according to nationalities. Only Arab respondents whose first language is Arabic were included in the study.

The instructors’ questionnaire, based on the instructors’ suggestions, was administered online. A secure link to the online questionnaire was sent via email to all the instructors in the Writing Studies Department, including the adjunct faculty.

With regard to the follow-up interviews, student respondents who were interested in participating were asked to provide their contact details in section IV on the questionnaire. A total number of 40 students were contacted via email to invite them to participate in the follow-up interview; however, only 11 responded back and confirmed their wish to participate. During a period of two weeks, 11 interviews with students and 5 interviews with instructors were scheduled and conducted. Before starting the interview, participants were asked to sign a consent form which explained their responsibilities and rights. The interviews were recorded using a mobile device, after getting the participants’ permission to do so. In addition, notes were taken by the researcher that were visible to the participants during the interview. The interviews with the instructors took place in their offices, while the student interviews were conducted in a vacant office in the Language building.

Data Analysis

The data was entered into SPSS, and basic descriptive statistics were conducted for each statement. The analysis showed that there were no noticeable differences between strongly agree and agree, and between strongly disagree and disagree, thus the 5-point Likert-scale was reduced to 3-point, namely, strongly agree/agree, neutral, and strongly disagree/disagree. In addition, the 30 items on the questionnaire were reduced to 20 items due to several reasons. First, during the data collection process, it was clear that some items were vague and confusing for many respondents. Although the questionnaire was piloted prior to the data collection, apparently the pilot study did not reveal all the areas that needed adjustments or clarifying. For example, the belief statement “Speak the students’ language” and “Negotiate assignments with students” were not clear to the respondents. Second, the descriptive statistics for each belief statement showed that some items were not statistically significant. Third, there were some items that were repetitive or overlapping in meaning. These ambiguous, statistically insignificant, and overlapping items were deleted from the final list of belief statements. Finally, the reduction helps to facilitate the analysis process, taking into consideration the limitations of page number and time constraints.

The 20 remaining questionnaire items were then grouped under three different categories: teacher personality-related characteristics, student-oriented characteristics, and teacher-related characteristics. This grouping helps to identify the type of characteristics that are valued the most according to the respondents’ beliefs. As the name of the category suggests, the first category (teacher personality-related characteristics) includes 5 personal characteristics of academic writing teachers that might be influential in the learning environment. The second category (student-oriented characteristics) deals with characteristics that directly involve students in the teacher-student relationship, and highlight the teacher-student negotiation and interaction, whether inside or outside classrooms. Teaching-related characteristics are the focus of the third category include a range of items, such as teaching practices, methodologies, and materials.

To answer the first and second research questions, two types of analyses were conducted, namely within-category ranking, and between-categories ranking. The first

type of analysis (i.e. within-category) involves identifying the mean for each statement in each category, and rank them accordingly. Moreover, the data obtained from the open-ended question was analyzed and grouped, in order to identify any additional characteristics that were valued by the respondents. The between-categories analysis is also based on ranking the categories, after identifying the mean for each category. The data collected from the interviews with both students and instructors was analyzed, and extracts that serve the purposes of this research were transcribed and highlighted whenever appropriate.

In regard to the third research question, cross tabulation tests and two-proportions tests were conducted to identify the relationship and the degree of significance between the belief statements and the independent variables (i.e. gender, high school curriculum, and current writing course). The next section presents and discusses the findings of the data analysis process.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

Based on the analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data collected for this research, this chapter presents the findings in the light of the three research questions:

1. What are the beliefs of EFL Arab students about the characteristics of effective instructors of academic writing?
2. What are the beliefs of academic writing instructors about the characteristics of effective teachers of academic writing in an EFL context?
3. What are the variables that most affect Arab students' beliefs and perceptions about academic writing teacher effectiveness?

Beliefs of students and Instructors about Academic Writing Teachers

In order to answer the first two research questions, the quantitative and qualitative data obtained from EFL Arab students and their instructors was analyzed. The quantitative data was obtained from 259 Arab AUS undergraduates enrolled in two introductory composition courses (i.e. WRI 101, and WRI 102), and from 11 academic writing instructors in the Writing Studies Department at AUS. Basic descriptive statistics were conducted on respondents' answers to 20 belief statements on the questionnaires. These belief statements were grouped under three different categories, namely, teacher personality-related characteristics, student-related characteristics, and teaching-related characteristics.

In the following sections, the research questions are investigated within a framework of analysis that involves: first, within-category analysis, and second, between-category analysis. Starting with the first type of analysis, each statement in the three categories was described statistically, and all statements were ranked according to their means. The means were ranked in descending order. Based on the values of the 5-points Likert scale used in the questionnaire, the lesser the mean, the higher it is ranked, and vice versa. The qualitative data obtained from the follow-up interviews was also analyzed and presented. The findings from the students' responses were presented in Tables 5, 7, and 9, while the findings from the instructors were presented in Tables 6, 8, 10.

Teacher Personality-related characteristics. On the questionnaires, given to both the students and instructors, 5 statements addressed characteristics that can be related to personal traits in teachers. Table 5 presents findings obtained from the student respondents.

Table 5. *Students' Responses to the Teacher Personality-Related Characteristics*

No.	Statement	Strongly agree and agree %	Neutral %	Strongly disagree and disagree%	Mean	Rank
1	A good sense of humor	82	16	2	1.20	3
2	Neat and tidy in appearance	70	29	1	1.31	4
3	Patient	93	7	0	1.07	2
4	Friendly	96	3.5	0.5	1.04	1
5	Strict	26.5	42.5	31	2.05	5

The great majority of the students responded with strongly agree/agree to two characteristics in this category, namely, being friendly (96%), and being patient (93%). The former quality ranked first ($M = 1.04$), and the latter ranked second ($M = 1.07$). Having a good sense of humor, which ranked third ($M = 1.20$), was seen as a characteristic of an effective academic writing teacher by a large percentage of the students (82%). The characteristic related to the physical appearance of the teacher, i.e. being neat and tidy in appearance, received 70 percent of strongly agree/agree responses, while only 29 percent of the students were neutral. On the other hand, the majority of the students showed tendency to be neutral regarding strictness as an effective characteristic, while a significant percentage of them strongly disagreed or disagreed (31%). This tendency to either “strongly disagree” or “disagree” made strictness rank last (5th), with a larger mean value ($M = 2.05$). As for the instructors, Table 6 presents their responses in relation to each belief statement in the teacher personality category.

Table 6. *Instructors' Responses to the Teacher Personality-Related Characteristics*

No.	Statement	Strongly agree and agree %	Neutral %	Strongly disagree and disagree%	Mean	Rank
1	A good sense of humor	91	9	0	1.09	1
2	Neat and tidy in appearance	73	27	0	1.27	2
3	Patient	91	9	0	1.09	1
4	Friendly	73	27	0	1.27	2
5	Strict	45.5	45.5	9	1.63	3

In general, the instructors tended to strongly agree or agree, in response to the items in this category. Having a sense of humor and being patient ranked first ($M = 1.09$), while being neat and tidy in appearance and being friendly ranked second ($M = 1.27$). The fifth belief statement, i.e. being strict, received the lowest percentage of strongly agree/agree responses (45%), which made it rank fifth in this category.

In answer to the first research question in relation to the category of teacher personality-related characteristics, students believe that being friendly and being patient are the two most important characteristics of academic writing instructors within this category. Furthermore, they believe that having a good sense of humor and being neat and tidy in appearance are also important characteristics, but to a slightly lesser degree. However, they do not agree that being strict is a characteristic of an effective academic writing teacher. In answer to the second research question, the findings yielded from the instructors' responses showed that having a good sense of humor and being patient are the two most valued characteristics. As one of the interviewed instructors commented, in the follow-up interviews, "being patient is very important, especially in writing classes, because students come to you with all sort of questions, and you have to help them and understand their frustrations." A slightly smaller number of the instructors believe that being friendly and being tidy in appearance are effective teacher personality-related characteristic.

Students' responses to the teacher personality-related characteristics revealed that being friendly in academic writing instructors is highly valued by the students. In general, and not exclusively in academic writing teachers, being friendly is viewed as an effective quality in teachers. Many studies that investigated the characteristics of effective teachers reported that the friendliness of teachers towards their students is one of the top characteristics in an effective teacher. For example, in their study, Faranda and Clarke (2004), who listed rapport among the top six qualities of good instructors, found that "a prevalent component of establishing rapport with students concerns personality factors associated with the instructors... [like] friendly, outgoing manner, along with a good sense of humor" (p. 275). Nonetheless, being friendly is a quality that is neither easy nor straightforward to define for many reasons. First, friendliness is not a concrete attribute. It can mean differently for different individuals, and it can be displayed in various ways and in varying degrees. Moreover, friendliness is a culturally bound quality, in other words, what is perceived as a friendly conduct in one culture might be offensive in other cultures, and vice versa. Thus the qualitative data obtained from the follow-up interviews with the students and their instructors was used to provide clarifications about the intricacies of this quality.

The qualitative analysis showed that although all of the interviewees agreed on the importance of being friendly as an effective characteristic, there is variation in the way they perceive and interpret it. The authoritative nature of the relationship between teachers and students seemed to largely influence the meaning and degree of teachers' friendliness towards their students. As one of the interviewed instructors put it:

Being friendly is an attitude. It is just that the students have to feel that you are approachable and you are not this professor upon a pedestal and you are dispensing wisdom on them and they can't approach you and ask you questions or ask for help or interact with you (Instructor)

From this perspective, friendliness in instructors opposes condescending approaches towards students, and it basically means being approachable and open to questions.

However, some instructors reported that such behavior cannot be maintained without striking a balance between friendliness and strictness or firmness.

For example, one of the instructors, who derives her beliefs about this delicate balance from her own research, argued that, “friendliness and strictness are not opposites. You can be strict in a friendly way. From my own research, I know that students want that degree of strictness because they identify themselves as being unable to manage themselves, especially on the entry level.” Within this view, the traditional role of the teacher as an authority figure and a manager of the class is maintained to a certain degree.

Most of the interviewed students expressed their understanding for this authoritative quality involved in teachers’ role; however, they saw that a certain degree of friendliness and care between teachers and their students can lead to positive outcomes. As Ahmed tried to explain:

It’s difficult to put in words. It’s nice when the teacher is a bit close to you rather than just a teacher. It’s nice to feel that they care about you and want you to succeed because they like you as a person rather than you as a student.
(Ahmed)

For Ahmed, rapport seems to be important in creating a healthy relationship with his instructors. As mentioned in the literature review, the affective qualities, or what Eken (2007) called the “less easily definable” aspects of teaching, have to exist in order to promote effective teaching (p. 167). The balance between being friendly and being strict, which the instructors were able to elaborate on eloquently, was reported by some student interviewees as well.

For instance, Aliaa stressed that it is essential for the instructors to, “connect with the students a bit. Not too much but like enough. Some professors don’t care about what you are going through and you can’t connect with them.” This balanced friendly connection can affect performance, as Nour contended. According to Nour, “if teachers are nice to me and we have some sort of connection, I feel that I have to do better and I feel that I can make bigger effort to actually try to understand and pay attention.” From Nour’s perspective, the relationship is a mutual exchange between the instructor and their students.

For some of the interviewed teachers and students, being friendly can be translated into concrete behaviors and practices, whether as classroom activities, or as interactions between instructors and students. For instance, Adel believes that some classroom practices can bring teachers and students closer. He related that:

My current instructor asks us a random question every day when he takes the attendance about personal stuff, like what is your favorite color? I think that is really nice. It basically brings us closer together and helps break down the barrier between the students and the teacher. So it feels a little bit like I'm dealing with a friend. (Adel)

Another behavior that can build rapport between teacher and students, as Tawfiq reported, is when instructors share personal information with their students. Tawfiq believes that, "there is usual tension between students and teachers, at least in the beginning of the course," and this tension can be alleviated when "a friendly teacher breaks the ice." Breaking the ice, as he explained, makes students relate to their professors because they, "say that when we were students we did this or that and so when they talk we feel that they are one of us rather than being further away and remote." However, some interviewed instructors did not hold the belief that sharing personal information and views is relevant. As one of the interviewed instructors asserted, "students are very curious about us but it's none of their business. They ask about my opinions and I never share with them or give them my opinions about anything because it is irrelevant." Although it seems that there are similarities in the beliefs about the importance of maintaining rapport between instructors and students through friendly behavior, the way in which this behavior is displayed and interpreted may vary.

In short, the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data showed that being friendly is one of the most valued characteristic in an academic writing instructor. However, the way it is defined, perceived, and displayed by different individuals varies to a certain extent. The qualitative analysis revealed that the majority of the interviewees agreed on the centrality of this characteristic in an academic writing instructor, but they also saw that a certain balance should be retained between friendliness and strictness.

Student-related characteristics. Seven belief statements on the questionnaires addressed characteristics related to instructors' behaviors and practices that target students. Table 7 presents the results of the students' responses in relation to the category of student-related characteristics.

Table 7. *Students' Responses to the Student-Related Characteristics*

No.	Statement	Strongly agree and agree %	Neutral %	Strongly disagree and disagree%	Mean	Rank
1	Treating students equally	93	5	2	1.09	2
2	Understanding that writing is a difficult task for students	73	24	3	1.30	3
3	Helping students develop self-confidence	92	7	1	1.09	2
4	Availability to help students outside the classroom	94	5	1	1.07	1
5	Regularly meeting with students one on one	59	32	9	1.50	5
6	Easy on grading	72	21	7	1.34	4
7	Flexibility in deadlines	61	26	13	1.52	6

Overall, the characteristics listed in this category were viewed as valuable by the student respondents, but in varying degrees. The availability of the academic writing instructor outside the classroom to help and support their students ranked first ($M = 1.07$). The majority of the students (94%) responded with either "strongly agree" or "agree" to this belief statement. Both statements 1 and 3, namely, treating students equally and helping students develop self-confidence, ranked second ($M = 1.09$). The majority of the students tended to strongly agree/agree on these two beliefs statements as effective characteristics.

The empathetic characteristic which is understanding that writing is a difficult task for students, ranked third ($M = 1.30$), with 73 percent of the students responding with either “strongly agree” or “agree.” Being easy on grading and being flexible in deadlines ranked fourth ($M = 1.34$) and sixth ($M = 1.52$), respectively. A larger percent of the students (13%) showed tendency to either “strongly disagree” or “disagree” on flexibility in deadlines than on the easiness on grading (7%). As for regularly meeting with students, only 59 percent of the students tended to “strongly agree” or “agree”, while a significant percentage of the students showed their neutrality (32%). In regard to the instructors, Table 8 presents findings obtained from the instructors’ responses.

Table 8. *Instructors’ Responses to the Student-Related Characteristics*

No.	Statement	Strongly agree and agree %	Neutral %	Strongly disagree and disagree%	Mean	Rank
1	Treating students equally	91	9	0	1.09	1
2	Understanding that writing is a difficult task for students	91	9	0	1.09	1
3	Helping students develop self-confidence	73	27	0	1.27	2
4	Availability to help students outside the classroom	82	9	9	1.27	2
5	Regularly meeting with students one on one	46	36	18	1.72	3
6	Easy on grading	0	27	73	2.72	5
7	Flexibility in deadlines	36.5	27	36.5	2.00	4

In regard to the instructors' responses to student-related characteristics, two characteristics ranked first ($M = 1.09$), namely, treating students equally and understanding that writing is a difficult task for students. A large majority of the instructors showed tendency to either "strongly agree" or "agree" with the following two characteristics: being available to help students outside the classroom (82%), and helping students to develop self-confidence (73%). Meeting regularly with the students was not valued as much, since only 46 percent of the instructors saw this as an effective characteristic.

Instructors responded equally with strongly agree/agree (36%) and strongly disagree/disagree (36%) to being flexible in deadlines, while only 27 percent of the instructors were neutral. Finally, none of the instructors saw that being easy on grading as a valuable characteristic. Thus it ranked in the last place ($M = 2.72$), with the majority of the instructors responding with either "strongly disagree" or "disagree" (73%).

The analysis of the students' responses in Table 7 showed that the students believe that the best characteristic of an academic writing teacher in relation to student-related characteristics is being available to help students outside the classroom. Students who have the opportunity to meet up with their academic writing instructors, especially during the revision process, benefit from their instructors interactive feedback (Craig, 2013). In the follow-up interviews, Abdulrahman spoke about his experience with receiving feedback from his instructor outside the time limits and spatial confinements of the classroom:

I go and see my teacher once or twice before the submission. It helps a lot, especially when you go early. They [instructors] are not so busy and they tell you how to improve. It is difficult to do it in the classroom, because they can't pick on small details. (Abdulrahman)

The interactive nature of such meetings facilitates responding to students' "diverse cultural, educational, and writing needs," and through dialogue, students can negotiate meaning, resolve ambiguities and get feedback on their individual strengths and weaknesses (Hyland, 2003, p. 192). Interestingly, students did not exhibit similar

agreement on the belief about having regular meetings with students, since only 59 percent of them showed tendency to strongly agree/agree to statement 5.

As Table 7 showed, the majority of the students (93%) believe that effective academic writing teachers should treat students equally. One of the interviewed students, Mohammed, who came from an Arabic school curriculum, raised an interesting point pertinent to this characteristic which is the discrepancy between students' levels. As Mohammed argued, "there should be some consideration about students' level in English," however, he added that, "the right thing to do is that students should be treated equally. If I were a teacher I will consider equality." It seems that treating students equally is a characteristic that is associated with effective teachers, broadly speaking. For instance, in their findings, Faranda and Clarke (2004) reported that "the ability to demonstrate just, equitable, and impartial treatment" is an essential component of outstanding professors (p.277).

Pertinent to treating students equally is statement 7, i.e. flexibility in deadlines. The analysis in Table 7 revealed that being flexible in deadlines received the lowest percentage of strongly agree/agree responses (61%), compared to the other belief statements. The follow-up interviews with the students helped sample some of the students' voices in regard to this characteristic. An example of a protagonist voice is Alia who believes that being flexible in deadlines is a humane and empathetic characteristic, because as she argued "professors don't know what difficult subjects the students are taking." Another example is Mohammed who believes that being flexible in deadlines is an effective quality, but only when it "includes the whole class." On the other hand, Meena hold a strong belief that to be flexible in deadlines is unfair, because, as she confirmed, "a deadline is a deadline. It is not fair because if I work hard to give something on time and someone shows and says I want to submit it late."

Helping students to develop self-confidence (statement 3) was highly valued by both the students (92%) and instructors (73%). One of the interviewed instructors enthusiastically expressed the importance of developing self-confidence in young student writers. He believes that these students often, "don't have self-confidence [in writing], because they are very dependent on other people's opinions," and he added that an effective academic writing instructor should, "be positive and praise them."

Similarly, another instructor, who studied English as a second language, commented that students who come from, “a second or foreign language background usually lack confidence in our classrooms,” she added that sharing personal knowledge about difficulties in writing, “helps students to overcome the obstacles when they think that my teacher has been through the same.” Interestingly, there is perhaps a cultural element to the relationship between praising and relating to students and fostering a friendly behavior towards them. As al-Issa (2003) observed, friendship among Arabs indicates certain obligations, such as, “offering help and doing everything he/she can to comfort a friend... [and] show admiration for his/her friends, and praise their goodness, preferably in their presence” (p. 587).

Teaching-related characteristics. Characteristics related to teaching behaviors and practices were targeted by 8 belief statements on the questionnaires. Table 9 presents the statistical analysis of the data obtained from these 8 belief statements in relation to students’ responses.

Table 9. *Students’ Responses to the Teaching-Related Characteristics*

No.	Statement	Strongly agree and agree %	Neutral %	Strongly disagree and disagree%	Mean	Rank
1	Be Knowledgeable and up-to-date in technology	62	33	5	1.42	6
2	Use textbooks	16	50	34	2.17	8
3	Assign readings and texts	54	35	11	1.56	7
4	Provide students with writing samples and models	97	2	1	1.04	2
5	Divide writing assignments into multiple drafts	81	15	4	1.23	3
6	Help students find a topic for their essay	78	15	7	1.29	4
7	Ask students to do peer review	72	21	7	1.35	5

8	Be precise and direct in giving feedback	97	2	1	1.03	1
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Generally speaking, in this category, there was a wider variation along the spectrum of agreement and disagreement among the student respondents. Providing precise and direct feedback ranked first ($M = 1.03$), with the majority of the students responding with strongly agree/agree (97%). In regard to writing assignments, providing writing samples and dividing the assignments into multiple drafts ranked second ($M = 1.04$), and third ($M = 1.23$), respectively. Helping students to find a topic for their essay ranked fourth ($M = 1.29$), with 78 percent of the students showing tendency to either “strongly agree” or “agree.” Ranking fifth is assigning peer reviews ($M = 1.35$) to which 72 percent of the students “strongly agreed” or “agreed.” Being knowledgeable and up-to-date in technology was perceived by 62 percent of the students as an effective characteristic, while less than half of the students (33%) showed tendency to be neutral. Assigning readings and texts ranked seventh ($M = 1.56$), while using textbooks ranked the last ($M = 2.17$). A percentage of 34 of the students were more likely to “strongly disagree” or “disagree” on using textbooks. As for the instructors’ responses, Table 10 presents the findings obtained from instructor respondents.

Table 10. *Instructors' Responses to the Teaching-Related Characteristics*

No.	Statement	Strongly agree and agree %	Neutral %	Strongly disagree and disagree%	Mean	Rank
1	Be Knowledgeable and up-to-date in technology	73	18	9	1.36	3
2	Use textbooks	27	46	27	2.00	6
3	Assign readings and texts	82	18	0	1.18	2
4	Provide students with writing samples and models	100	0	0	1.00	1
5	Divide writing assignments into multiple drafts	64	9	27	1.63	4
6	Help students find a topic for their essay	55	27	18	1.63	5
7	Ask students to do peer reviews	73	18	9	1.36	3
8	Be precise and direct in giving feedback	82	18	0	1.18	2

The majority of the instructors “strongly agreed” or “agreed” to most of the characteristics in this category. From Table 10, it is clear that providing students with writing samples and models was valued by all the responding instructors. The second rank ($M = 1.18$) includes two characteristics, namely, assigning readings and texts and being precise and direct in feedback, with a vast majority of the respondents “strongly agreeing” or “agreeing” (82%). Being knowledgeable in technology and assigning peer reviews were perceived as effective qualities by 73 percent of the respondents. Dividing writing assignments into multiple drafts was not valued by all the instructors (64%), and it ranked fourth. About 55 percent of the respondents showed tendency to either “strongly agree” or “agree” that helping students to find a topic is an effective

characteristic. Using textbooks ranked the last ($M = 2.00$), with the majority of the respondents being neutral (46%).

From the description of Table 9, it seems that students believe that being precise and direct in providing feedback is one of the most effective teaching-related characteristic. In the follow-up interviews, Nour expressed her strong agreement with the belief that academic writing instructors should be direct in providing feedback. She vehemently asserted that:

I strongly strongly agree with this. Sometimes you go to a professor and she explains to you what is in the rubric. I need you to tell me exactly what to do! She would say fix your structure. But what does that mean? The rubric is vague. Sometimes I make huge changes and then it turned out that I needed to make a small change, because that is my understanding of vague instructions.
(Nour)

From her comment above, it seems that Nour is, to a certain degree, dependent on her instructors' feedback. Similarly, Mariam believes that effective academic writing instructors should "write what they want to see in the essay and what they don't want to see," instead of addressing the issues in the classroom, because, "students sometimes will not be concentrating in the classroom." This type of teacher-dependent behavior is even more apparent in the interviewed students' comments on statement 4, i.e. providing writing samples and models.

As shown in Table 9, the great majority of student respondents (96%) believe that providing writing samples and models is an effective teaching-related characteristic of an academic writing instructor. Mohammed, for example, believes that samples and models help students to, "know how the teacher is thinking while grading," which allows students to, "avoid the mistakes that she [the instructor] doesn't like." From Mohammed's comment, it seems that he is dependent on what the instructor wants or does not want to see in the written product.

This dependency of Arab students on their teachers has been also observed by Meleis (1982), who commented that Arab students, "have learned that somebody who is more qualified, more educated, and more expert than they in matters of education should be responsible for decisions relating to education" (p. 443). According to

Meleis' (1982) observation, the reason behind this dependency can be attributed to Arab students' perception of the role of the teacher as more qualified to make educational decisions.

Instructors' feedback is not the only type of feedback students receive in an academic writing classroom. Assigning peer reviews, as Table 9 presented, ranked fifth compared to the other beliefs in the teaching-related characteristics. In-depth insights were drawn from the follow-up interviews with the students about the use of peer reviews. These insights varied from extremely negative beliefs to positive beliefs, in addition to, conditional agreement on assigning peer reviews. For example, after she experienced peer reviews in class, Nour found them to be "completely useless, because we [students] are basically at the same level." She added that her peers, "look for silly mistakes... anything to mark to look like they made an effort." On the other hand, Ahmed believes that peer reviews are "important, because it helps you know what others think about your ideas." Mohammed had both positive and negative experience with peer reviews in his writing courses. He elaborated that, "only 20% of the students will read my essay efficiently and try to find the problems while others may look at it and just say that they read it," so he concluded that, "it should be monitored."

The wide variation in students' responses and comments on peer reviews is not uncommon. As mentioned in the literature review, Rollinson (2005) found that students might perceive the feedback of their peers as less accurate and less helpful than teacher feedback. Furthermore, their beliefs about peer reviews might be greatly influenced by their previous experience with this type of feedback, including the level of their peers, the time allocated to peer review activities, the design of the peer review assignment, the amount of training in peer review, and whether or not peer reviews were monitored by their instructors (Ferris, 2003).

Dividing the writing assignment into multiple drafts, as shown in Table 9, ranked third. A huge majority of the students believe that dividing the writing assignment into multiple drafts is an effective teaching-related characteristic (81%). According to the follow-up interviews, the beliefs about multiple drafting seemed to cluster around two different directions. The first direction, which is shared by the

majority of the interviewed students, indicated that multiple drafting is an essential constituent of the writing process.

For example, drafting is so essential for Baaj, as he declared that, “I even can’t see how someone can do writing without multiple drafts.” These participants gave various reasons for why they believe that multiple drafting is an effective teaching-related characteristic.

The first reason was that multiple drafts affect the amount of effort students put in their writing assignment. For instance, Mohammad, who reported that he strongly agrees with multiple drafting, explained that when teachers review their students’ drafts, “they will force the students to actually do some work.” Another reason was that the multiple drafts approach in academic writing can provide students with a sense of security and guidance. As Ahmed reported, having the drafts checked by the instructor, “helps students to know if they are going in the right direction.” Along these lines, three of the interviewed students (Tawfiq, Alia, and Nour) maintained that the lack of drafting may cause frustration and unexpected outcomes. As an example, Tawfiq believes that receiving feedback on a draft is essential, “because if there is a major mistake it should be pointed out before it’s too late.” Moreover, based on her experience with two writing instructors - one who used to check students’ drafts, while the other instructor did not - Aliaa formulated the belief that the effective method in writing assignments is multiple drafting. She elaborated on how she came to value multiple drafting in the comment below:

The teacher in the previous course used to look at our drafts then tell us what to do. This time we submitted one draft and I was shocked because of my grades. I didn’t know my flaws. It’s not fair. (Aliaa)

Generally speaking, the majority of the interviewed students believe that assigning multiple drafts is an effective teaching-related characteristic for several reasons, such as pushing students to write, avoiding major problems in their essays before grading, and receiving guidance from their instructors throughout the composition process.

The second view, which was reported by two instructors, is not in favor of assigning multiple drafts as an integrated component of writing assignments. The two instructors provided a number of reasons to clarify their beliefs. One of the

interviewed instructors explained that, “multiple drafts promotes too much input from the instructor,” and consequently, “the original writers lose their voice, and you want to maintain that voice.” She related her teaching methodology to the belief that producing multiple drafts on the same assignment is a stagnant process, as she explained:

Students do one assignment and the issues that were problematic in that assignment get signaled out through the use of rubrics and feedback and that needs to be applied to the next assignment. So it’s a forward process rather than stagnant one working over and over to make one essay perfect because there is no perfect essay. That has been my methodology for years. (Instructor)

The other instructor held the belief that if teachers use multiple drafts in writing assignments, they “collaborate on the paper and edit it for the students,” he concluded that “what works better is to break the essay up into discrete chunks, and receive feedback on these chunks from the teacher or from peer reviews.” The belief statement about assigning multiple drafts produced controversial data in terms of how effective this method is as a teaching-related characteristic.

The huge discrepancy in the number of respondents between the instructors (11) and students (259) does not allow for conclusive statistical comparisons; however, it is obvious that some degree of variation in beliefs exists between the students and their instructors in relation to the efficiency of multiple drafts in writing assignments. Similarly, the follow-up interviews shed light on other variations in relation to some beliefs in the teaching-related characteristics category, such as being knowledgeable and up-to-date in technology. These variations did not exist only between students and instructors, but also between students themselves, or instructors themselves.

All of the interviewed instructors and students believe that technology is important in the writing classroom; nonetheless, the degree of how important technology is varies with each individual. In general, the responses of the interviewees fall differently along a continuous spectrum between agreement and disagreement.

Some of the interviewees, those who showed tendency to “strongly agree” or “agree” on the belief statement number 1 in Tables 8 and 10, argued that technology is fundamental to the writing classroom. For example, one of the instructors asserted that, “technology is huge and necessary in academic writing classrooms,” because, “it changes the way that you teach, and changes the way students learn.” Another instructor reported that technology broadens the possibilities and potentials of a classroom, as he specified that, “with the advancement with technology a lot of things that I require them to do, like finding articles online, can actually be done in the classroom,” and he concluded that, “the smart classrooms are really helpful.” Some student interviewees shared the same enthusiasm for technology. Technology in the classroom is a reflection of the world outside the classroom, as Ahmed contended, “this is how the world is moving, towards technology, and it makes it easier to find and share ideas with people.” These beliefs function as few examples on how some students and instructors perceived technology in the academic writing class positively.

On other hand, there were some respondents who were either neutral, or have concerns about the first belief statement (i.e. being knowledgeable and up-to-date in technology). As is shown in Table 9, 33 percent of the student respondents were neutral, while only a slight minority responded with “strongly disagree” or “disagree” (5%) to this statement. The follow-up interviews helped in gaining a deeper analysis on this point. One of the interviewed students who disagreed with this statement, Aliaa, argued that technology:

is not that important. It’s useful that they reply to your emails, but having the touch screens, I feel it’s distracting honestly. Whiteboards are much more better for me, when the professor writes something, it is better than just touching the screen and showing us. (Alia)

Other interviewed students, like Mohammed and Meena, reported conditional agreement. As Mohammed expressed, the efficiency of technology, “depends on the professor,” because, “if the professor doesn’t know how to use it, then it will waste time.” Meena expressed similar beliefs when she indicated that, “I think teachers actually get distracted because they have such a hard time trying to work it, especially the interactive board,” and she concluded that, “the only technology I like in the class is typing.” One of the instructors shared a nostalgic belief about the value of

traditional methods, when she asserted, “I find it that we still have to remind ourselves that we are writers, and writers can still use pens and papers. Everything doesn’t have to be flashy.”

Nowadays, the ubiquitous presence of technology makes its use in higher education unquestioned. From the discussion above it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents believe, in varying degrees, that being knowledgeable in technology is an effective teaching-related characteristic. Nonetheless, there were certain concerns that need to be addressed. First, it is often assumed by teachers that the use of high tech methods motivates and engages young generations more effectively (Craig, 2013). While the use of technology might bring many beneficial outcomes in an academic writing classroom, the generalization that all young undergraduates enjoy and engage in technology should not be taken for granted. Furthermore, the use of technology requires proper training of the instructors, in order for them to use it efficiently. This process demands time and effort on the part of the instructors, since not all instructors are intuitive technology users (Craig, 2013).

Additional characteristics. An open-ended question was added to the end of the questionnaires, in case respondents wished to add any additional qualities of an effective academic writing instructors. None of the instructors added any additional qualities; therefore, only the responses of the students were categorized and summarized in Table 11, with accompanying illustrative examples. The categories are presented in descending order of the number of occurrences for each.

Table 11. *Open-ended Question Analysis – Additional Characteristics*

Characteristic	Occurrences	Examples
Fair (in workload, assignments, and grades)	8	“A good writing professor should not assign writing assignments that has to be submitted in a short time, as writing is a gradual process and students can not write perfect every time”
Be aware of students’ learning styles and preferences	6	“academic writing teachers should be flexible about students’ approach to writing of their learning styles. Example: shouldn’t make basic drafts mandatory, as a visual learner like me outlines in graphic organization and diagrams”
Understand individual levels and abilities	6	“I think professors should understand that some students come from Arabic schools, unlike students who come from English schools, in which it would be easier for them to write essays”
Open-minded	5	“be open-minded about different ideas and beliefs”
Motivate students	5	“motivate students and make them write willingly”
Know and respect the students’ culture	4	“writing teachers should respect the student’s culture”
Prepare students for exams and quizzes	4	“A good teacher should assign the topic before a final exam to have ideas and points because a good piece of writing can’t be written in a couple hours”
Interested in writing and teaching writing	3	“I believe when an academic writing teacher loves her job and loves to initially write, she’ll make a great teacher and might influence her students to pursue more writing and reading”

As Table 11 shows, the data analysis of the open-ended question revealed that there was a number of recurrent characteristics which were reported by students. The most recurrent characteristic is being fair in terms of workload and grading. Recognizing students’ different learning styles, preferences, and levels also reoccurred as an effective quality in students’ responses, among other characteristics.

This section has shed light on some of the additional characteristics that are valued by the EFL Arab students about their academic writing instructors. The findings in Table 11 were used in the last chapter to explain some of the research implications and recommendations.

Between-categories analysis. This section discusses the findings from the second type of analysis (i.e. between-categories). The discussion focuses on students' responses solely, because the small number of the instructor respondents did not yield statistically significant results. In order to analyze the relationship between the three categories (i.e. teacher personality-related, student-related, and teaching-related), the mean for each group was identified using descriptive statistics, and they were ranked accordingly. Table 12 presents the mean, and the percentage of strongly agree/agree, neutral, and strongly disagree/disagree responses for each category.

Table 12. *Findings from Between-Categories Analysis*

Category	Strongly agree and agree %	Neutral %	Strongly disagree and disagree%	Mean	Rank
Teacher Personality-related category	73.5	19.5	7	1.33	2
Student-related category	78	17	5	1.27	1
Teaching-related category	70	21.5	8.5	1.39	3

From Table 12, student-related category ranked first ($M = 1.27$), with 78percent of positive responses. The teacher personality-related category ranked second ($M = 1.33$), while teaching-related category ranked third ($M = 1.39$). The differences between the three categories were not huge or very significant. In terms of positive responses, all of the three categories received relatively similar percentages. However, the second category, i.e. student-related, had the highest percent of positive responses and the least percent in strongly disagree/disagree responses. Moreover, teacher personality-related characteristics ranked higher than teaching-related characteristics by EFL Arab students.

Although it cannot be stereotypically generalized, perhaps Arab students are most likely to be influenced by the teacher’s personality, as Al-Issa (2007) observed, “Arabs’ perceptions of [teachers’] age and personality traits... are culturally rooted” (p. 313).

The Variables that Affect Students’ Beliefs

In answer to the third research question, two-proportion tests were conducted on each of the 20 belief statement in relation to the following independent variables: gender and high school curriculum. The two-proportion test compared the proportion of one group from the independent variable groups that responded with strongly agree/agree to a certain belief statement to another group, like the females group and males group within the gender independent variable. Table 13 presents the results of the two-proportion tests in relation to the independent variable of gender. As Table 13 shows, the two-proportion tests yielded significant values ($p < 0.05$) in relation to only three belief statements (see Appendix D).

According to Table 13, the two-proportion tests conducted on the first belief statement, i.e. being strict, yielded significant value ($p = 0.036$), with the proportion of females who responded with either “strong agree” or “agree” is significantly higher than the proportion of males who responded with the same. Interestingly, being knowledgeable and up-to-date in technology has a very significant ($p = 0.003$). The proportion of males who “strongly agreed” or “agreed” is significantly higher than the proportion of females. Finally, the two-proportion test in relation to the belief statement “helping students find a topic for their essay” resulted in also in a significant value ($p = 0.037$). In regard to this belief statement, the proportion of males who chose strongly agree/agree is significantly higher than the proportion of females.

Table 13. *Results of the Two-Proportions in Relation to Gender*

Belief Statement	Gender
Be strict	0.036
Be knowledgeable and up-to-date in technology	0.003
Help students find a topic for their essay	0.037

Similarly, two-proportion tests were conducted on the 20 beliefs statements in relation to the high school curriculum independent variable (see Appendix E). As shown in Table 14, the two-proportion tests yielded significant values ($p < 0.05$) for three belief statements: being flexible in deadlines ($p = 0.025$), being knowledgeable and up-to-date in technology ($p = 0.017$), and helping students find a topic for their essay ($p = 0.011$). In all the three belief statements, the proportion of the students who studied in Arabic curriculum school who “strongly agreed” or “agreed” is significantly higher than those who studied in English curriculum schools.

Table 14. *Results of the Two-Proportions in Relation to High School Curriculum*

Belief Statement	High School Curriculum
Be flexible in deadlines	0.025
Be knowledgeable and up-to-date in technology	0.017
Help students find a topic for their essay	0.011

From the discussion of Table 13 above, it can be concluded that the female students tended to respond with either “strongly agree” or “agree” to being strict, as an effective personality characteristic. On the other hand, male students showed higher tendency to respond with strongly agree/agree to being knowledgeable and up-to-date in technology, and helping students find a topic for their essay as effective teaching-related characteristics. This discrepancy of the response selection tendency between males and females in regard to the second belief statement (i.e. Be knowledgeable and up-to-date in technology) may be attributed to the fact that 81 percent of the male respondents studied in the College of Engineering, compared to only 27 percent of the female respondents. Perhaps the educational nature of the Engineering field affected the students’ choices in relation to the belief about technology, since the College of Engineering generally offers more technologically-driven majors than those offered in the College of Arts and Sciences, for example. Similarly, the fact that a higher proportion of males responded with strongly agree/agree in relation to the belief statement “helping students find a topic for their essay” can also be explained statistically.

One plausible explanation is that the 39 percent of the female respondents to this statement were majoring in one of the following colleges: the College of Arts and Sciences, and the College of Architecture, Art and Design, compared to 6 percent of

male respondents. Most likely, students who come from these two colleges face less difficulty in finding an appropriate topic for an academic writing essay. For example, appropriate topics for argumentative essays are most likely to be associated with majors like Mass Communication or Literature, rather than Chemical Engineering.

In regard to the variable of students' high school curriculum, the discussion of Table 14 revealed that being flexible in deadlines, being knowledgeable and up-to-date in technology, and helping students find a topic for their essay received significantly higher rate of strongly agree/agree responses from students who studies in Arabic curriculum schools. Thus students who studied in Arabic curriculum schools are more likely to value flexibility in deadlines as an effective characteristics of an academic writing instructors, than students who came from English curriculum schools. Compared to Arabic curriculum schools at UAE, perhaps English curriculum schools offer more Westernized style of education which emphasizes values like meeting deadlines and taking charge of responsibilities.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research aimed at identifying the characteristics of effective academic writing instructors according to the beliefs of EFL Arab undergraduates enrolled in WRI 101 or WRI 102, and their instructors at AUS. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were utilized to investigate these characteristics. The students and their instructors were presented with 20 belief statements about some of the characteristics of effective academic writing instructors. Then these belief statements were grouped under three main categories (teacher personality-related characteristics, students-related characteristics, and teaching-related characteristics). Moreover, through statistical analysis, the research examined how variables like gender and high school curriculum affected students' beliefs about these characteristics.

The data analysis revealed that EFL Arab undergraduates, generally speaking, value the characteristics in the student-related category, compared to the other categories. More specifically, they saw that an effective academic writing instructor should be available to help students outside the classroom, and help students to develop self-confidence. In relation to the teacher personality-related characteristics, the student respondents valued being friendly as a highly effective characteristic of academic writing instructors, along with being patient. Furthermore, they saw that providing precise and direct feedback and writing samples are two of the most effective teaching-related characteristics. On the other hand, instructor respondents believe that having a sense of humor and being patient are the most valuable characteristics in the teacher personality-related category. In addition, they ranked treating students equally and understanding that writing is difficult for students the first, in student-related characteristics. Finally, the instructors did not consider multiple drafting and helping students to find topics for their essays as highly valuable teaching-related characteristics, compared to other characteristics like providing writing samples, and assigning readings and texts.

The two-proportion tests revealed that gender and high school curriculum affected response selection tendency of the students. Female students were more likely to value strictness in their academic writing instructors, while male students showed more tendency to value instructors who were knowledgeable and up-to-date in technology and helped them to find topics for their essays.

In regard to high school curriculum, students who come from Arabic curriculum schools valued the following characteristics in academic writing instructors: being knowledgeable in technology, helping students find a topic for their essays, and flexibility in deadlines.

From the discussion of the findings in the previous chapter, the next section offers few insights and implications of this research in the field of EFL academic writing in higher education.

Implications

The implications of this study are various, and they can be grouped under three main areas: pedagogical improvements, teacher education and training, and teacher evaluation and hiring. One of the goals of research in teacher effectiveness is improving the quality of teaching and promoting better learning environments. Some of the research findings may present pedagogical implications for the improvement of academic writing teaching in the context of this study. As the findings suggested, being friendly is the most valued characteristic by the students in relation to the teacher personality-related category. This finding stresses the importance of fostering a caring and friendly relationship between teachers and students. Although the meaning and degree of friendliness, as suggested by the discussion of the findings, varies based on many individual and cultural factors (Al-Issa, 2003), instructors can work generally on improving their relationship with their students through different methods. For example, they can integrate ice-breakers and activities that trigger interactive environments between teachers and students. Furthermore, as suggested by Eken (2007), affective qualities, such as teacher's communication skills and techniques with her/his students can be developed through recording lessons and reflecting on patterns of behaviors, and through peer observations.

Thus it might be beneficial to stress the importance of affective qualities and the methods used to develop these qualities in EFL teachers' training sessions, workshops, or graduate programs. Adding to that, as shown in Table 11, one of the additional characteristics emphasized by the students is the knowledge and respect for the students' culture. As indicated by Al-Issa (2005), in a multicultural context like the AUS, the academic world can be a place for intercultural communication, or

intracultural clashes. Consequently, it is essential for teachers to be aware of cultural sensitivities, especially in academic writing courses, where argumentative topics and debate occur constantly.

Another area that can be linked to cultural differences in educational systems is students' dependency on their instructors. The findings from the analysis of the questionnaires and the follow-up interviews showed that EFL Arab students are most likely to be dependent on their instructors, especially for direct feedback and opinions. At AUS, where Western educational values prevail, EFL Arab students – especially those who studied in Arabic medium schools – might find themselves in new and frustrating situations. As Al-Issa (2005) explained, in individualistic cultures, “independence and self-reliance are greatly stressed and valued. Students are usually motivated to take part in their learning process, become the center of the classroom, speak their minds in classroom discussions” (p. 152). The findings of this study implies that EFL Arab students might benefit from a gradual shift that introduces them to independent educational values. For example, as the findings in table 9 showed, students value their instructors' help to find topics for their essays. Some instructors might argue that this type of assistance fosters dependency in students. However, a gradual introduction of the necessary skills to search for a topic can be promoted by, first providing students with broad subjects, and then allowing them to narrow it down. Once they build such skills, they can move to be more independent in following their interests and finding a topic on their own.

As the findings have revealed in chapter 4, using technology is valued by most of the respondents. However, it was also clear – especially from the follow-up interviews – that this indication should not be used to make generalizations about younger generations. Thus asking students about their preferences, and allowing for more flexibility in teaching methodology can be very beneficial in an academic writing classroom. Individual students have different learning styles and preferences. As reported in Table 11, preferences ranked second as a recurrent characteristic in students' open-ended responses. Moreover, the variation in the students' and instructors' beliefs about multiple drafting might suggests that teachers should vary the type of assignments they use in their classrooms, in order to encompass a wider range of students' preferences.

Limitations

There are few limitations that emerged from this research. First, the number of students who participated in the pilot study perhaps was not adequate to reveal the vague and confusing areas in the belief statements on the questionnaire.

Consequently, while conducting the study on large samples, it was apparent that some belief statements were vague to the respondents. These statements were excluded later from the analysis.

Second, the analysis of the data revealed that some variations exist between EFL Arab students and their instructors regarding their beliefs about the characteristics of effective academic writing teachers. One of the intentionally proposed research questions aimed at investigating the similarities and differences between the beliefs of students and their instructors. Nonetheless, a major limitation of this study is the fact that only a small number of instructors participated in the research. Accordingly, the elicited data from the instructors was not statistically significant which hampered the process of comparing and contrasting between the beliefs of students and instructors.

Recommendations

In order to address some of the limitations of this research, future studies could seek to investigate the similarities and differences between the beliefs of EFL Arabs students and their instructors, by recruiting a larger sample of participants, especially in regard to the instructors. Moreover, it would be interesting to compare the beliefs of EFL Arab students to the beliefs of students from other nationalities at AUS, such as Indians, Pakistani, and Persians.

It is also recommended to track the agreement between teachers' beliefs and their actual practices. As Junqueira and Payant (2015) show in their case study of novice teacher's beliefs and practices about written feedback, what teachers believe does not necessarily match their practices. Furthermore, as it was clear from Table 11, students indicated some important belief statements. Perhaps in future studies, it would be insightful to investigate these statements, as well.

Another recommendation is to conduct a longitude study. Provided that adequate time is available for a longitude study, it would be interesting to follow the

changes (if any) in students' beliefs about effective teaching of academic writing, as they progress through courses and experience different teachers, teaching styles, and academic writing assignments. For example, a case study of a number of students as they go through this journey might provide invaluable insights into the nature of students' beliefs, how they create them, and how they change with experience.

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Appendix A: Students' Questionnaire

Students' Questionnaire

American University of Sharjah

College of Arts and Social Sciences

Lama Zakzak

g00055714@aus.edu

Effective Teachers of Academic Writing in an EFL Context: Students and Teachers Beliefs

This study explores the qualities of effective academic writing teachers in an EFL context, according to the beliefs of students and teachers. Your responses will help in gaining an understanding of your perception of the qualities of effective academic writing teachers. Your participation is voluntary. Your responses on the survey will be kept confidential. Your participation in this survey will not affect your grades in any way. It will require 10-15 minutes of your time. Your cooperation is highly appreciated!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the researcher through the following email address: g00055714@aus.edu

Section I:

1. Age group: 17 – 20 21- 23 +23
2. Gender: Female Male
3. First language: Arabic English Other: _____
3. College: CAS CAAD CEN SBA
4. Nationality: _____
5. GPA: Below 2.00 2.00 –2.49 2.50-2.99 3.00-3.49 3.50-4.00
6. High School Curriculum: English Arabic Other: _____
7. Current writing course: WRI 001 WRI 101 WRI 102
8. Writing courses you took previously at AUS: WRI 001 WRI 101 WRI 102 None

Section II:

Please read the list below carefully. For each statement, select the response that best represents the degree of your **agreement** or **disagreement**:

1 Strongly Agree **2** Agree **3** Neutral **4** Disagree **5** Strongly Disagree

No.	An effective academic writing teacher is someone who should:	1 SA	2 A	3 N	4 D	5 SD
1	Have a good sense of humor					
2	Be neat and tidy in appearance					
3	Be patient					
4	Be friendly					
5	Be Strict					
6	Show personal interest in students					
7	Treat students equally					
8	Understand that writing is a difficult task for students					
9	Help students develop self-confidence					
10	Be available to help students outside the classroom					
11	Regularly meet with students one on one					
12	Be easy on grading					
13	Be flexible in deadlines					
14	Negotiate assignments with students					
15	Be interested in teaching academic writing					
16	Use textbooks					
17	Assign readings and texts					
18	Provide students with writing samples and models					
19	Connect writing assignments to the students' major					

20	Help students find a topic for their essay					
21	Try new and creative teaching methods					
22	Speak the students' first language					
23	Be knowledgeable and up-to-date in technology					
24	Divide writing assignments into multiple drafts					
25	Ask students to do peer reviews					
26	Provide clear instructions and guidelines					
27	Assign homework					
28	Be precise and direct in feedback					
29	Correct grammar and punctuation					
30	Correct the organization of the essay					

Section III:

Are there any particular characteristics that you believe an academic writing teacher should possess in addition to the characteristics mentioned in the list above?

Section IV:

I need several students to volunteer to be interviewed on this topic. If you are willing to be interviewed, please complete the following section. Your interview data and questionnaire responses will all remain anonymous:

Name: _____

Email: _____

Mobile: _____

Appendix B: Instructors' Questionnaire

Instructors' Questionnaire

American University of Sharjah

College of Arts and Social Sciences

Lama Zakzak

g00055714@aus.edu

Effective Teachers of Academic Writing in an EFL Context: Students and Teachers Beliefs

This study explores the qualities of effective academic writing teachers in an EFL context, according to the beliefs of students and teachers. Your responses will help in gaining an understanding of your perception of the qualities of effective academic writing teachers. Your participation is voluntary. Your responses on the survey will be kept confidential. It will require 10-15 minutes of your time. Your cooperation is highly appreciated!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the researcher through the following email address: g00055714@aus.edu

Section I:

1. Qualification: MA PhD Other: _____

2. Your qualification is in:

- Literature
- Linguistics
- Applied Linguistics
- Writing Studies

TESOL

Other: _____

2. Gender: Female Male

3. Years of experience teaching academic writing: _____

4. Nationality: _____

Section II:

Please read the list below carefully. For each statement, select the response that best represents the degree of your **agreement** or **disagreement**:

1 Strongly Agree 2 Agree 3 Neutral 4 Disagree 5 Strongly Disagree

No.	An effective academic writing teacher is someone who should:	1	2	3	4	5
		SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Have a good sense of humor					
2	Be neat and tidy in appearance					
3	Be patient					
4	Be friendly					
5	Be Strict					
6	Show personal interest in students					
7	Treat students equally					
8	Understand that writing is a difficult task for students					
9	Help students develop self-confidence					
10	Be available to help students outside the classroom					
11	Regularly meet with students one on one					
12	Be easy on grading					
13	Be flexible in deadlines					

14	Negotiate assignments with students					
15	Be interested in teaching academic writing					
16	Use textbooks					
17	Assign readings and texts					
18	Provide students with writing samples and models					
19	Connect writing assignments to the students' major					
20	Help students find a topic for their essay					
21	Try new and creative teaching methods					
22	Speak the students' first language					
23	Be knowledgeable and up-to-date in technology					
24	Divide writing assignments into multiple drafts					
25	Ask students to do peer reviews					
26	Provide clear instructions and guidelines					
27	Assign homework					
28	Be precise and direct in feedback					
29	Correct grammar and punctuation					
30	Correct the organization of the essay					

Section III:

Are there any particular characteristics that you believe an academic writing teacher should possess in addition to the characteristics mentioned in the list above?

Appendix C: Sample Interview Questions

1. In general, what are the top 3 qualities for an effective academic writing teacher?
2. In general, what are the worst qualities in an academic writing teacher?
3. How can academic writing teachers provide effective feedback?
4. In your opinion, how can a teacher be friendly?
5. Do you find peer reviews effective? And why or why not?
6. How can an academic writing teacher be helpful to her/his students?
7. How can an academic writing teacher develop self-confidence in his/her students?

Appendix D: Two Proportion Tests - Gender

Belief Statement: Be strict

Test and CI for Two Proportions

Sample	X	N	Sample p
Females	43	135	0.318519
Males	25	122	0.204918

Difference = p (1) - p (2)
Estimate for difference: 0.113600
95% CI for difference: (0.00726726, 0.219934)
Test for difference = 0 (vs ≠ 0): Z = 2.09 P-Value = 0.036
Fisher's exact test: P-Value = 0.047

Belief Statement: Be knowledgeable and up-to-date in technology

Test and CI for Two Proportions

Sample	X	N	Sample p
1	73	135	0.540741
2	89	124	0.717742

Difference = p (1) - p (2)
Estimate for difference: -0.177001
95% CI for difference: (-0.292512, -0.0614907)
Test for difference = 0 (vs ≠ 0): Z = -3.00 P-Value = 0.003
Fisher's exact test: P-Value = 0.005

Belief Statement: Help students find a topic for their essay

Test and CI for Two Proportions

Sample	X	N	Sample p
1	99	135	0.733333
2	104	124	0.838710

Difference = p (1) - p (2)
Estimate for difference: -0.105376
95% CI for difference: (-0.204146, -0.00660713)
Test for difference = 0 (vs ≠ 0): Z = -2.09 P-Value = 0.037
Fisher's exact test: P-Value = 0.049

Appendix E: Two Proportion Tests – High School Curriculum

Belief Statement: Be flexible in deadlines

Test and CI for Two Proportions

Sample	X	N	Sample p
1	104	183	0.568306
2	52	73	0.712329

Difference = p (1) - p (2)
Estimate for difference: -0.144023
95% CI for difference: (-0.270250, -0.0177959)
Test for difference = 0 (vs ≠ 0): Z = -2.24 P-Value = 0.025

Fisher's exact test: P-Value = 0.034

Belief Statement: Be knowledgeable and up-to-date in technology

Test and CI for Two Proportions

Sample	X	N	Sample p
1	108	183	0.590164
2	54	73	0.739726

Difference = p (1) - p (2)
Estimate for difference: -0.149562
95% CI for difference: (-0.272886, -0.0262382)
Test for difference = 0 (vs ≠ 0): Z = -2.38 P-Value = 0.017

Fisher's exact test: P-Value = 0.031

Belief Statement: Help students find a topic for their essay

Test and CI for Two Proportions

Sample	X	N	Sample p
1	137	183	0.748634
2	64	73	0.876712

Difference = p (1) - p (2)
Estimate for difference: -0.128078
95% CI for difference: (-0.226252, -0.0299046)
Test for difference = 0 (vs ≠ 0): Z = -2.56 P-Value = 0.011

Fisher's exact test: P-Value = 0.028

Vita

Lama Zakzak was born in 1985 in Kuwait. She studied at Kuwait schools, and graduated from high school in 2004. Then she graduated from Damascus University with a Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature in 2008. In 2011, she joined an MA graduate program at Damascus University, and passed all modules in the program. She transferred to the MA TESOL program at AUS, and started working on her thesis in 2015.

Prior to joining the MA TESOL Program at AUS in 2013, Ms. Zakzak taught English at the Higher Language Institute, in Damascus University, Syria. Her responsibilities included teaching EFL to adult students and assessing their performance. She received an extensive training course in ELT at the Higher Language Institute. She worked as a research assistant in a number of educational institutes, in Damascus and the UAE.