The Impact of Poor Handwriting on EFL Students Test Scores

Case of Teachers of English at Mohammed Kheider University

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master's in sciences of language at Mohammed Kheider of Biskra.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to

The ones that I most care for and love: My dear Mother and Father

My beloved sisters and brothers

To My precious family

Aunts and Uncles

The ones that I've been blessed to know

My friends

Those who sincerely supported me with their prayers, effort, and love

To all of you, I gladly dedicate this work

Thank you

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Abstract

This study is conducted with teachers of English at Mohammed Kheider University of Biskra. A descriptive study is used to find out the impact of poor handwriting on EFL students test scores; this study raises the following questions: does poor handwriting affects students' scores? What are teachers' attitudes towards students' poor handwriting? Investigating the problems teachers face when correcting test papers with poor legibility? And what kind of feedback teachers give to their students? This research aims to investigate the impact of poor handwriting on students' scores besides to the difficulties teachers face during the process of correcting tests paper and whether they provide support and help in order to improve their students' handwriting. This research study is based on one main hypothesis; we hypothesize that if teachers consider poor handwriting when correcting students' test papers; students test scores will decrease. Therefore, this study is divided into three chapters; the first chapter deals with the most important elements of this research which is the writing skill and handwriting. It gives an overview about the importance of handwriting and how it affects the academic success and progress in addition to EFL students' problems with both writing skill and handwriting. The second chapter treats testing generalities such as defining the main characteristics of an effective test and because MCQ test and Essay test are commonly used by university teachers to measure students abilities and knowledge; this study tackles different aspects of essay test and MCQ test, scoring, designing, advantages and disadvantages. A survey method is selected to obtain data throughout teachers' questionnaire; after collecting and analyzing the gathered data results reveals that students' poor handwriting affects their tests scores. This descriptive research deals with only teachers' perspective toward students' poor legibility; it is recommended to Examine more the importance of increasing teachers' awareness of the side effects of poor handwriting besides More research is needed to determine the mechanism leading to the effectiveness of handwriting and more study on how can supplemental instructions improves students' poor handwriting.

Key words: poor handwriting, legibility, and fluency

List of abbreviations

EFL: English as foreign language.

MCQ: Multiple choice questions.

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General Introducation

Introduction

Technology plays a great role in today's world due to the facility that offers. Nowadays education depends on developed technologies to facilitate the learning process and that situation spread to cover even students who started to use typing instead of handwriting; perhaps talking about handwriting may seem old fashioned, yet it is still a very necessary tool for academic success because students are obliged to handwrite in tests. Writing legibly is considered as a challenge for learners with poor handwriting; for them writing is always a hard task to fulfill since it needs a lot of patience and care to produce a high quality written production such as: paragraphs, articles, and essays.

This new challenge is considered as a key factor in successful language learning. Handwriting is supposed to be an important element for students to create clear, organized, and well written text besides it is a necessary tool for students to perform effectively. Researchers in the field have revealed that learners with poor handwriting maybe viewed as lazy, unmotivated, and at risk of receiving low scores.

Writing has been always a challenge for learners since it is another tool for them to communicate their thoughts and knowledge. "Struggling with handwriting can lead to self fulfilling prophecy in which students avoid writing, come to think themselves as not being able to write an fall further and further behind their peers" (Graham 49-55), in other words poor legibility has an impact and influence on students psychological state and effecting their educational progress. Studies reveal that poor handwriting has significant influence on student's text production abilities and are closely linked to overall academic achievement Parush et al asserts that " Poor handwriting can have a serious effect on students' progress and because they are at risk of receiving bad marks based on their handwriting"(39_84); furthermore, Graham et al states that" teachers judge and grade students based on the appearance of their work, and the world judges adults on the quality of their handwriting"(35), that is to say, the appearance of students paper plays a crucial role for teachers because the impression of neat, clean, and organized exam paper is not the same as unorganized, unclear handwritten. "Essays that are harder to decipher require more time and effort, some essay may be misinterpreted entirely simply because the teacher misunderstood a word or a sentence poorly written. Sometimes the teacher might even give up as he tries to understand what a student has written" (Emaikwu 5); Therefore, handwriting plays an important role in students success Graham et al says that" spelling and handwriting are among

the least glamorous topics in today's language arts class setting and both subjects have been pushed to the margins of our curriculum"(179-201) in addition, " good handwriting in all school subjects including Mathematics is a skill that is highly valued in our society" (Emaikwu 2)

1. Statement of the problem

Students are struggling with handwriting difficulties that influence their written productions and finally their educational development "In short, if students are to learn they must write" (Graham and Perin 2)

For many EFL learners handwriting is playing a major impact in the academic success. If handwriting legibility is not developed, students may be at risk of receiving low score Emaikwu asserts that "poor handwriting often frustrates teachers and results in lower grades(5); moreover, Markham says that" better handwriting consistently received higher scores than did those with poor handwriting regardless of the quality of content"(16-24) besides to its effects on students scores, poor handwriting develop a psychological state such as: loss of motivation, frustration, and inability to take notes and finish home works.

2. Significance of the study

Writing a paragraph or an essay is considered as difficult task to finish due to writing is the most sophisticated skill in the process of learning a foreign language.

Teachers are struggling with students' poor legibility and this result in low scores because they misunderstood students' answers, moreover, it is a hard task for them to pick the correct answers and sometimes they do not even see them so, fair correction is impossible. The present research will tackle the importance of handwriting and its negative impact on learners' scores, in addition to the problems both teachers face when correcting tests papers and students struggling finish the test and do not stand behind peers.

3. Aims of the study

The aims of this study are:

1. Investigating the impact of poor handwriting on students' scores.
2. Finding the difficulties teachers face when correcting tests papers.
3. Finding out the efforts teachers provide to help students to improve their handwriting.

4. Research questions

1. Does poor handwriting affects students' scores?
2. What are teachers' attitudes towards students' poor handwriting?
3. Investigating the problems teachers face when correcting test papers with poor legibility?
4. What kind of feedback teachers give to their students?

5. Research hypothesis

The present research is based on one main hypothesis. We hypothesize that if teachers consider poor handwriting when correcting students' tests papers, students' tests scores will decrease.

6. Research methodology

This study is a descriptive research that seeks to find out the impact of poor handwriting on EFL students testing scores.

A survey method is selected to gather the required information to answer the addressed questions of this study; the study focuses on describing the importance of handwriting in educational development and its negative impact on students' scores besides to problems teachers face when correcting papers with poor legibility. Describing facts about this study will not be sufficient to realize the objectives of this study; however, providing some numerical data will support and give credibility for the results.

Questionnaire is the appropriate tool to be used since it is a survey method. An interview with teachers would be added to questionnaire; however, it's a hard task to conduct interview due to time consuming and teachers have other tasks to do. One questionnaire is submitted to teachers to collect the required information of this study since the topic concerns only teachers; The collected data is analyzed and presented in tables and graphs that help in gathering finding that answers the addressed questions of this research.

7. Selecting the sample

The target population is English teachers at Mohammed Kheider University of Biskra. Twelve questionnaires have been administered to all of them.

Chapter One

The writing skill and Handwriting

Introduction

Writing is among the most complex human activities. It involves the development of an idea, the capture of mental representation of knowledge, and experiences with subjects. Arapoff describes writing" as much more than an orthographic symbolization of speech, it is, most importantly, a purposeful selection and organization of experience."(233). Therefore, writing is viewed as the most important and most sophisticated compared with other skills such as listening, speaking, and reading; in addition; it plays a crucial role in social, cultural, professional and academic contexts which have led to consider it as a very important and central skill in the world of Applied linguistics and is still an area of lively debate and research.

Learning a language requires the mastery of the four skills: speaking, reading, and writing, in particular, learners who intend to fallow a higher education or chosen a given language to be their own major. For EFL students in Biskra University, writing is the most needed skill because classes such as : written expression, linguistics, Didactics, language Acquisition, and Psycho-pedagogy requires written composition besides most of tests and evaluation are through writing.

Writing is basically an essential skill in examining the learners 'performance yet, most of EFL learners find it a stressful, challenging and demanding because writing legibly is always a big challenge for learners in different levels as it is a difficult task to fulfill. It needs a lot of patience and care to produce a high quality written production for instance paragraphs, articles, and essays.

Moreover, students need to improve their handwriting to achieve success both in and out the classroom. Legible handwriting enables learners in different levels to communicate their ideas and knowledge successfully; however, students showing difficulties are often struggling academically because untidy, unclear, and poor handwriting influences their scores; Briggs affirms that "handwriting have a highly significant influence on teachers' marking of essays so that poor handwriting predicate low grades" (50)

Therefore, legible handwriting with adequate speed is crucial for students to keep up with classroom demands since it's a necessary tool to perform successfully. "Despite the diminished place of handwriting in the curriculum and broad availability of word

processing programs, fluent and legible writing remains a necessary practical skill" (Schlagal 194). Even more significantly, the failure to attain handwriting competency is often has far-reaching negative effects not just on academic success but also self-esteem due to "people presents themselves to the world through their handwriting and are inevitably judge by it. From our earliest schooldays success and failure are often measured in terms of neat handwriting" (Sassoon 20).

This chapter is divided into two sections. First section discusses the most obvious aspects of writing skill such as: definition, basic rules of writing, importance of writing and then writing with other skills. Since handwriting is still a very necessary tool for academic success students are obliged to handwrite in exams; therefore, the second section will be devoted to handwriting. It discusses the main elements such as: definition, constituent of handwriting, factors affecting handwriting, and the impact of poor handwriting on students' tests scores besides to teaching handwriting and how handwriting instruction improves composition and promotes success. Finally this section spot lights on the importance of handwriting.

Section one

The writing skill

1. Definitions of writing

Writing has several definitions which differ in meaning depending on their context; Writing in general means words in symbols (for example Hieroglyphics) written down as a means of communication (Encarta Dictionary 2151). A part from a piece of written language designed to be read, writing also refers to the activity through which such a piece of written language is produced. However, it is far from being a matter of transcribing language into symbols. So, writing is not as simple as it seems to be."But writing is clearly much than the production of graphic symbols just as speech is more than the production of sounds" (Byrne 1) this means the graphic symbols have to be arranged in certain ways and conventions to form words, and latter are arranged to form sentences. Writing is" a mental-effort demanding and thus a time consuming one: it is far from being a simple matter of transcribing language into written symbols; it is a thinking process in its own right. It demands conscious intellectual effort which usually has to be sustained over a considerable effort of time" (White and Arndt 31) it means that writing is based on the assumption that requires a high level of abstraction and actually demands conscious work in that it is not inborn, one has to go through much practice to write well. (Ouskourt 13) agrees with the previous definition and said that "Since this skill is not inborn, one should practice it a lot to learnt it and become a good writer".

According to Vygotsky" written speech is a separate language function differing from speech in both structure and language mode of functioning; even its minimal development requires a high level of abstraction and it actually demands conscious work"(98), writing is one of the major skills for using language through which one can convey his thoughts. It is stated that" writing is a reflection of what can occur only after the main ideas are in place" (Clark 8). This means that the writer's goal is to know how to say what has been discovered, not in discovering and selecting what to say. Lado put it as follows:"we mean by writing in a foreign language the ability to use structures, the lexical items, and their conventional representation in ordinary matter of fact writing" (248)

Writing is also seen as an embodiment of the vocal sound of speech. It is defined by River as "the act of putting what has been spoken in conventional graphic form"(242).

However the view of Bader contrast with the previous definition "learning to master this skill, i.e. to write means knowing the components of the writing system, for example letters, and how to make the difference between them, and use them appropriately" also "as writing is a means of communication between people, it should fallow some convention that are unique for all, which relate letters to have words and words to have sentences, which must be well organized to have a coherent whole"(6-7).

So, the idea we draw from the previous definitions is that writing is the activity of being able to communicate with language through graphic representation of ideas. According to Walters" writing is the last and perhaps the most difficult skill students learn if they ever do" (17).

There is no point in prediction that writing is easy. Indeed certain cognitive psychologists have described it as the most complex demanding of all cognitive activities undertaken by human beings because there are no rules (Bracewell 2)."It is likely that in the great majority of situations, our students still primarily write for their teachers, or perhaps for an examiner, both acting in the role of an evaluator"(McDonough and Shaw 383).

Raimes points out that:" A student who is not given the time to work, along with the appropriate feedback from the teacher or other students, will discover new ideas, new sentences and new words as he plans, writes a first draft and revises what he has written for a second draft"(10).

2. Basic rules of writing

In order to produce good pieces of writing, it is important to respect certain writing characteristics as brevity, clarity, and simplicity. Generally affect any piece of writing positively when they are respected.

2.1. Brevity

Since wordiness obscure meaning and readers seems to feel boring, it is beneficial to convey the maximum meaning in minimum words. For instance, instead of expressing one idea in five sentences, it is better to put it in one meaningful, coherent, and well punctuated sentence. Therefore, writers should be aware of the importance of going through all the norms that control any piece of writing. King claims that in order to achieve brevity:

1- Try to keep sentences variable in length, but generally short.

2- Using long sentences not necessarily make you a better writer.

3- To use only full stops is as unnatural as walking without using your knee and ankle joints (160).

2.2. Clarity

Communication will certainly be impossible unless clarity is present. In other words, if this important element is missing, the texts message will never be conveyed in a clear way. Generally readers are not interested whether the writer respects the rules or the theories of punctuation or not, they will only care about a full understanding of what is written. Larocque points out that" students should try to make their writing as clear and as straight forward as possible. This, in fact, cannot be realized if one aspects as in our case punctuation is missing. Therefore, it is even wise to try to consider all the relevant aspects and it would be quite strange if one expects to impress readers without punctuating his writing" (17).

2.3. Simplicity

Using complicated words which may sound odd for readers; this cannot satisfy readers 'needs. It is good to be as simple as possible particularly at the level of content. At the forms' level, focusing on surface points; such as, spelling and punctuation certainly abolish complexity and helps in the creation of clear and simple pieces of writing; commas and periods are there to perform the latter characteristics. So, using simple sentences as well as clauses with the required punctuation marks, will create excellent pieces of writing.

3. The importance of writing

Writing plays a crucial role in foreign language learning cannot be neglected. Writing serves learning in several ways. To begin with, writing gives students the chance to go beyond the oral language and use their creativity in order to apply the learnt knowledge in new situations. Writing also enhances students' grammatical knowledge as well as idiomatic and lexical knowledge (Raimes 3). In addition, as students engage in the process of discovering new language, they make use of different abilities that reinforce learning as Emig put it, "writing through its inherent reinforcing cycle involving hand, eye, and brain marks a uniquely powerful multi-representational mode for language."Furthermore," writing promotes students thinking in general and critical

thinking in particular. In fact, students' thought can grow and clarify through writing" (124-125); Bazerman et al; first, students release a lot of ideas, then they evaluate them in order to choose whether to include them in their writing or not. After that they decide on the organization of these ideas. As a result, they will learn to discipline their thinking in order to affect their readers. This will have a positive impact on their real life learning (57) Writing is "a way of fashioning a network of association and increasing our potential for learning" (Irmscher 240-241).

Considering all these contributions of writing to learning, it is not surprising that foreign language writing" has gained significant autonomy, both as a research discipline and as an educational program" (Roberts and Cimasko 125).

4. Writing with other skills

4.1. Writing and reading

Although writing is a productive skill and reading is a receptive one, it is important to make the distinction about how much can be learned about writing from reading. Reading tends to be the essential source of knowledge about writing. Both complement each other and skill in one result in a proficient user of the other; in this respect, Stosky advances that:"Better writers tend to be better readers of their own writing as well as of other reading material, that better writers tend to read more than poorer writers, and that better readers tend to produce more systematically mature writing than poorer reader" (636).

As for Stosky, good writers tend to be good readers, and those who are good writers tend to read more than poorer writers. What's more, those who read a lot come to out with good writing unlike those who do not read a lot. Writing and reading seem closely light since reading results in good writing, and good writing is the exposure to a lot of readings. Kucer states that" the relationship between reading and writing is that of parallel or complementary processes" (191). Each process has an implicit power to impact and stimulate growth in the other. Therefore, reading serves writing and leads to its maturity. The more writers read, the better their writing will be. Writing feeds on reading, and its life cycle reliant on it.

Moreover, Mackey considers that" all four skills are interwoven and contribute to an effective learning, when he states that before one can write s/he has to be able to read and

shape the letters of the alphabet and has, before writing sentences, to say them aloud". (436)

4.2. Writing and speaking

Writing like speaking is concerned with communicating specific thoughts or information to a specific audience to be understood, moreover, writing like speech is used for maintaining relations between people as Chandler states, "writing serves a multiplicity of purpose in everyday life: communication is only one of the reasons why people write. For instance, like speech, writing also has what linguists call a phatic function: maintain rapport between people."(43)

However, Weigle distinguishes the two productive skills in terms of permanence, production time, distance, orthography, complexity, and formality. Permanence refers to the lasting nature of the written medium. Whereas oral language is non-permanent and has to be processed in real-time, the written medium leaves a trace and is, thus, everlasting. Production time, on its part, relates to the fact that in speech, the spontaneous nature of the medium makes that the flow of conversation has to be kept up with no enough time to totally monitor what is being said. Writers on the other hand, go through a whole process of planning, drafting, and revising; hence; they have much more production time. Distance involves the absence of a shared context between writer and readers, there is no immediate feedback. Consequently, the next needs to be as clear and intelligible as possible (15).

Furthermore, compounding the difficult nature of writing is the orthography which carries a limited amount of information compared to the richness of devices available to speakers among such devices pitch, speed, and pausing can be given as examples. Aside from the orthography, the written medium is complex in that it uses long clauses and subordinates which is not the case of the spoken medium where short clauses are joined by coordinators. Last but not least, writing is considered as a more formal medium of communication in comparison to speech.

5. EFL writing problems

Most people see writing difficult. Hilton and Hyder state that many people "regard writing as a chore: something that is difficult, which you delay or try to avoid" (7). Byrne state that most writers be professional or not "world agree that it is usually neither an easy

nor spontaneous activity"(1). Furthermore, writing in a Fl or L2 is more demanding than writing in one's mother tongue on the basis that the former needs some abilities which maybe "less well developed than in one's first language"(Schoonen 166). In writing student may face linguistic problems such as difficulty in finding the selected words and structures so that the production texts can easily interpreted; another problem is the cognitive one which concerns the organization of ideas in a way that can be understood. The last cause of difficulty is when writing is imposed on the student. Here the problem is psychological:

5.1. Anxiety

Anxiety is" a feeling of self-doubt and sense of tension" (Woolfolk 365). A student may fear to perform in a given task however, anxiety is a personality trait in which case it is called state anxiety Brown draws attention to anxiety as a present feeling while writing stating that" you may have felt a certain level of anxiety building within you as you felt pressure to write an in class essay that would be judged by the teacher, graded and returned with no chance for your future revision" (336).

Harmer considers writing anxieties very dangerous in the sense that it can result in a negative attitude towards writing (37). According to Oxford harmful anxiety can have negative effects on learners by "reducing participation and creating overt avoidance of the language" (13). Harmer discusses student's fear of writing, first he mentioned lack of writing practice even in the mother tongue, second having nothing to say can also be an obstacle to students, and finally some people are not interested in the writing activity.

5.2. Motivation

Slavin considers motivation as" one of the most important ingredients of effective instruction"(328). However, it is neither easy to define nor to restrict its sources for it is" a product of many factors, ranging from the student's personality and abilities to characteristics of particular learning tasks, incentives for learning, setting, and teacher's behavior". Slavin claims that it is the educator's job to sustain students' motivation and engage in activities that lead to learning (329).

5.3. Self-esteem

The constructivist approach places learner developing conceptions of themselves at the centre of the learning process because these conceptions profoundly influence the ways in which individuals make sense of new stimuli and construct new knowledge Williams and Burden argues that these conceptions would influence the ways in which learners tackle various tasks. Under this area of learner's conceptions of themselves falls the complex notion of self-esteem (194); according to Woolfolk" self-esteem is an affective reaction, a judgment about who you are" (71).

5.4. Self- confidence

Confidence is considered as a" condition to be a successful writer and by developing writing skills and confidence writing becomes not only more pleasurable and satisfying but also more effective" (Hilton and Hyder 7). Harmer raises the issue of self-confidence and considers it very important for good writing (34). On the other hand, Neman argues that writing does not require merely knowledge, but also" the self-confidence to exercise this knowledge". He highlights two types of solutions to writing problems. To start with "the craft-centered solution is concerned with correcting student's mistakes and even criticizing them (5).

Nevertheless, this solution was rejected on the basis that it results in anxieties in the learner which would distort learning. The other solution is what he calls "the affect-centered solution"; the latter puts much emphasis on the general atmosphere of the learning process. In his words "the primary goal is no longer that oh helping students to acquire the skills necessary for good writing but of letting them use the opportunity writing offers to achieve a better understanding of themselves and their world.

Section two

Handwriting

 According to Shlagal **"**Spelling and handwriting are among the least glamour topics in today's language arts…………..and have been pushed to the margins of our curriculum" (179)

1. Definitions of handwriting

Handwriting has a several definitions which differ on each other depending on their context.

Alston and Taylor refers to handwriting as" the physical skill of writing" (35); that is to say, handwriting means using the physical act to encode sounds in meaningful, symbolic forms; they also agree that "handwriting is a complex activity that requires the integration of verbal, perceptual and motor skills to produce a specific pattern of movement in order to form letter shapes" (35), however other researchers defines handwriting as" writing done by hand using a pen or pencil" (Forbes et al 209) this means that writing is a physical movement of a hand; Berninger asserts that "handwriting is a language by hand which is useful reminder of its context and purpose"(328). Handwriting is still a very important tool despite of the developed technologies "the skill of handwriting is not only one of the fundamental building blocks of literacy; it also provides children with access to other parts of the curriculum. An automatic style releases the brain to concentrate on other ideas i.e. spelling, grammar, syntax, style and content" (Stainthorp et al 1). Sassoon asserts that "handwriting is not just a simple matter of letters neat or untidy. It is a physical act that involves not only the hand but the whole body; it interacts with other cognitive tasks and above all is affected by and in turn reflects the writers' emotions and attitude" (11)

2. What constitute handwriting?

Legibility and fluency are the most important element in handwriting performance; legibility refers to text which is clear enough to be deciphered, readable (Forbes et al 162). It is also refers to the features of written text that contribute to readability (Rosenblum et al 433); however, Graham and Weintraub distinguishes between fluency and legibility; they asserts that "fluency of handwriting is usually understood as writing speed and measured by letters written per minute. Legibility is often apprehended as readability or quality of writing, legibility of handwriting is not a unitary construct but composite of simpler elements including letter formation, slant, size, spacing, alignment, and line quality"(134).

Fluency refers to handwriting speed in which legibility is maintained while writing quickly; the writer does not have to stop and ponder how to make an individual letter. Handwriting is written with ease (Graham and Harris 26). Below- standard performance in letter formation and size in particular can greatly reduce handwriting readability (Amundson and Weil 524). Handwriting sample maybe readable even though poor alignment interferes with its appearance; speed is also an important aspect of handwriting

ability if a student is to cope with classroom demands and speed is variable depending on context instruction given, whether the students copying, taking dictation, or free writing (Bonney 7-15) it is, therefore, crucial to recognize features of handwriting such as: legibility and fluency.

3. Factors affecting handwriting

Students with handwriting difficulties typically have problems keeping up with the volume of written work required to accomplish which will evoke their academic progress and lead to lowered self-esteem that results frustration due to handwriting is usually judged as a reflection of an individual's intelligence as illustrated by several studies were lower marks assigned to students with poor handwriting and higher marks given to those with neat and clear handwriting despite similar context.

Several research studies have been conducted to investigate factors which may contribute to handwriting difficulties; there are two main factors which are intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic such as: kinesthesia, fine motor skills, visual motor integration, and orthographic coding these factors have demonstrated to be more significant in handwriting performance:

Kinesthesia is an important element for learning which refers to the sense of position and movement. Some studies have indicated that students who have difficulty perceiving or storing kinesthetic information have difficulty with handwriting as well as improving performance through practice (Harris and Livesey 23-27); another factor which contribute to handwriting performance is fine motor skills and finger function (Berninger and Rutberg 198) however, it does not mean all students with poor legibility have poor fine motor skills (Rubin and Henderson 17-24)

Orthographic coding refers to "the ability to develop an intact representation of the letters of alphabet and rapidly, accurately encode and reproduce them from memory" (Weintraub and Graham 123). In a word, Graham and Weintraub claim that orthographic coding is not a predictive of handwriting legibility where as other findings asserts that orthographic coding ability contribute significantly to handwriting fluency (Abbott and Berninger 478).

Sovik agree that visual motor integration is the most crucial predictor of handwriting performance, visual motor integration is related to handwriting precision besides poor integration results in slow writing speed (Volman et al 451).

Extrinsic factors are related to setting position, chair/ desk height, writing instrument, type of paper used and its placement on the desk, environmental lighting and noise, blackboard, distance when copying and volume of handwriting the student is expected to complete (Penso 48); it is crucial to know biomechanical factors when addressing handwriting difficulties. Generally, a student should be stated seated with feet flat on the floor, hips and low back supported against the chair back, knees flexed to approximately 90° and elbows slightly flexed with forearms resting comfortably on the desk surface (Penso 49).

Furthermore, there are many factors contributing to handwriting problems such as legibility which is considered as a quality of handwriting, correct letter formation, size, and proper letter spacing (Volman et al 452) that is to say, the ability to decipherer handwriting is one important element of handwriting quality. Montgomery set twelve rules of legibility which are:

1. Letters must be the correct height in relation to each other.
2. Letters meant to be closed must look closed.
3. Letters that are meant to be open must look open.
4. Straight strokes must look straight.
5. Curved strokes must look curved.
6. Parts of letters meant to be joined together must be joined.
7. Loops and arches must appear, also cross bars and dots on (i)
8. Over curves and under curves must differ.
9. Space letters so that it is clear where one letter ends and the next begins.
10. Finish one letter before starting the next.
11. The joining stork must be indicated or space left to show where one letters ends and the next begins.
12. The joining must not distort a letter so that it looks like another or suggest an extra letters (40)

3.1. Handwriting and dysgraphia

According to Kay dysgraphia refer to a "disorder of written language expression in childhood as opposed to disorder of written language acquired in childhood" (1); in other words dysgraphia means a neurological disorder results in illegible, underdeveloped handwriting, however when a student has handwriting difficulties without a diagnosis of neurological or intellectual disability; handwriting difficulties is still termed dysgraphia

(Feder and Majnemer 43). Dysgraphia is characterized by handwriting problems including inappropriate sizing, inaccurate word alignment or word spacing, varying letter size, distorted letters and incorrect letter formation (Volman et al 453); understandably dysgraphia is the difficulty to produce legible writing and keeping up with the speed of writing in classroom.

Miller et al set four factors distinguishes dysgraphia from normal handwriting first, distortions in overall shape of the letters, second distortions in the relative size of letters, third irregular spacing between the letters, fourth crowding of words (103-110)

3.2. Handwriting and pencil grips

The term pencil grips refer to the use of the thumb, index and middle finger so that they function together and perform well co-ordinate movement (Ziviani 778). Feder and Majnemer found that poor handwriting is a result of less mature pencil grasp has been suggest as the ideal grasp for writing due to it allows for efficient distal movements of the pen or pencil (45); therefore, for some students handwriting difficulties maybe a result of a non-functional pencil grasp; students need fine motor skills such as strength and dexterity for grasping a utensil in order to produce the sufficient in-hand manipulation skills necessary for handwriting. The dynamic tripod is the ideal grasp for holding a pencil (Dennis and Swinth 183).

Rosembloom and Horton affirms that the dynamic tripod as the posture in which shoulder, elbow, and the wrist stabilization allow the joints to perform very well and intricate movements because using the dynamic tripod grasp, the distal control of the movement allows the muscles to have pressure on the pencil in which reduce muscle fatigue (3)

Poor handwriting can lead to many negative outcomes; Engel-yeger et al state that students with poor handwriting requires more time for assignment completion (182). In other words students need to make correction to fix sloppy, illegible writing or correct letter formations.

4. The impact of poor handwriting on students test scores

Whatever the reason is, students with handwriting difficulties avoid written tasks and sometimes they become disruptive when they are asked to write since; it takes long time and effort to complete writing assignment or taking notes during lectures.

Students handwriting competence affects aspects of classroom success; "handwriting appears to play a much more significant role in underachievement" (Montgomery 51). Even more significant, research studies have found on the basis of handwriting fluency alone, students with poor legibility requires fifteen minute completing a task that would take other students just thirteen minute to finish (Graham et al 42).

Even more serious, studies have revealed that handwriting legibility influences students scores on test of composition due to tests usually include a written task. Teachers who have evaluated two or more versions of the same essay which differ only in the handwriting gave higher marks to the papers written with neat, legible handwriting where as papers with identical content in poor handwriting get lower marks (Graham et al 42-52).

Another study done by Brown in which twenty seven original essays were graded in three graphic types: typed, nicely handwritten, and poorly handwritten. Results reveal that nicely handwritten papers of the essay received significantly higher scores where as poorly handwritten and typed copies; there was no difference in the scores between the typed and poorly written. That is to say, legible, neat and clear handwriting valued over typing (24-29). Montgomery states that handwriting, spelling, and composition played significant role in students learning process despite the fact that they are gifted, talented and illegible handwritten exhibited the fallowing traits:

1. Large gap between oral and written work.
2. Failure to complete schoolwork.
3. Poor execution of work.
4. Persistent dissatisfaction with achievement.
5. Avoidance of trying new activities.
6. Inability to function well in groups.
7. Lacking in concentrations.
8. Poor attitudes to school.
9. Dislike of drill and memorization.
10. Difficulties with peers.
11. Low self image.
12. Unrealistic goals set (52)

Poor handwriting has serious negative effects on both academic success and students' self-confidence.

5. Teaching handwriting

5.1. Handwriting need for teachers' awareness

According to Berninger it is crucial to increase teachers' awareness about the serious impact of poor handwriting on students' academic success by including information on their professional development plans, in addition, to information on how to aide students with writing difficulties. It is not uncommon when the student does not leave margins, writing may be crowded, placement on paper gives an un organized appearance, and leaving space between assignment parts is not used to make reading easier (27)

5.2. Handwriting assessment

"Once an intervention begins, assessment and diagnostic teaching should be used in ongoing way to examine its effects" (Graham and Perin 24). It is crucial teachers discover students need and select appropriate instructional guidelines for handwriting instruction. Therefore, it is important teachers provide with methods for evaluating students' handwriting whether the difficulty of handwriting is intrinsic factors or external ones, or both, the problem remains in illegible handwriting such as: letter formation, alignment, spacing, slant, and size (Alston 237). Speed also is a writing factor which often slow or unable students to complete written work in a specific time.

Students handwriting assessment have many forms such as checklists tools have been designed to evaluate the components of legibility for instance: slant, size, and alignment, however, it have been claimed that these tools is time consuming and may not provide accurate reflection of the readability of a students work (Sudsawad 26-33).

There are other approach to handwriting legibility is looking at the global legibility of writing piece, using readability as the first criterion to determine legibility (Sudsawad et al 518); Amundson agree with this approach and claim that it is easy to use and more practical to apply in classroom (10) where as Rosenblum et al asked for further research and development in the field of students' self-evaluation of handwriting and recommended the research community continue to develop tools which allow greater understanding handwriting "motor perceptual, and cognitive components underlying poor handwriting" (74).

Moreover, some researchers put forward some tips to effectively teach handwriting:

1. Teach handwriting for on most ten to fifteen minute periods if not all day of the week, with a tool of about fifty to hundred minute instruction per week (Graham 50).

2. Introduce easier form letter and teach formed letters together later (Gentry and Graham 5).

3. Avoid teaching confused letters such as p and q in the same time (Gentry and Graham 5).

4. Encourage students to use comfortable, effective grip (tripod grip) when holding their writing utensil (Graham 53).

5. Provide students with lined writing paper (Cahill 224).

6. Make students to circle their best-formed letters (handwriting self-assessment) (Graham 52).

6. Handwriting instruction improves composition and promotes success

In reviewing the literature, there appears to be the need to teach handwriting in classroom is negated although if teachers really want to improve their students writing, they need not just focus on the content but also on the handwriting.

Experimental evidence reveals that teaching handwriting in a direct and systematic way during a regular period brings on the greatest legibility in students handwriting (Wood et al 24-30); therefore, "explicit supplemental instruction in how to form and fluently write the letters of the alphabet causes students to evidence improvement in both handwriting and compositional skills" (Miller 3).

However, some teachers claim that handwriting can be replaced by other alternative modes of composing. For instance word processing, problems in developing composition by hand lead to arrest writing development especially in compositional fluency.

Berninger et al has study composition produced by six hundred students in which raters who were asked to rate the quality and count the number of words, do not recognize the students' actual handwriting. A finding reveals that the structural equation modeling showed a correlation between the qualities of students' handwriting (652). These results support the claim that handwriting exerts constraints on the text generation process in beginning writers.

Miller agree with Berninger and state that "frequent, brief, explicit instruction helps students' automate letter production and retrieve letters forms rapidly from memory and this increase the probability that will become skilled writers"(3).

Furthermore, studies have found that handwriting disabilities can have a serious impact on students' motivation and self-esteem. Graham examined the impact of handwriting instruction on the handwriting and writing performance. Students who produce slowly handwriting were also experiencing difficulty in learning to write (620).

Berninger also extended this study by including students with and without disabilities and examined whether the effects of handwriting instruction were maintained over. The study reveals that, not only did supplemental handwriting instruction lead to greater effects in compositional fluency; students in the handwriting instruction were more accurate in writing (Miller 3).

Therefore, the simple act of teaching writing fluently and legibly can impact students' ability to be successful; Miller support that claim and state that "handwriting may sound old-fashioned in today's world. Yet, because success in classroom has a heavy emphasis on testing it maybe truer today than it was twenty years ago" (1)

Students need a legible, fluent style of handwriting to participate in writing task and develop as writer, however, handwriting difficulties arrest students to develop as writers. Miller set a number of reasons behind students' underdevelopment:

- Individual differences in handwriting most notably fluency which predict how much and how well students writes.
- Writers need to access the letters rapidly to produce them without conscious effort.
- Handwriting speed accounts for a significant proportion of the variability in the students compositions.
- Writers preoccupied with the motor skills of how handwriting have less time to think deeply about their composition content as they are laboriously writing. This result in writing that is less coherent, precise, and complex.
- Over time, students with handwriting difficulties may develop an approach to composing that minimizes the use of other writing processes such as: planning and revising to eventually avoid writing since they develop a negative assumption that they cannot write (1)

Baily asserts that "the aim of handwriting instruction is the production of personal handwriting which is both flowing and natural but is legible and fast enough to meet all reasonable demands" (65).

7. The importance of handwriting

With the new advanced technologies; handwriting seems an old-fashioned topic. However, writing ability accompanied with legibility is considered an essential ingredient for students' success (Stewart 419) since students spend almost of their time performing handwriting and facing difficulty in this area can impact academic progress due to illegible handwriting create a barrier to accomplish other skills such as: spelling and story composition (Mchale and Cermak 898-903).

Therefore, handwriting remains a crucial element for students to master despite the fact that of using computers; handwriting is not only a means of communication but also a necessary life skill such as: writing a letter, completing an application form, or writing a cheque. Handwriting is still the most immediate form of graphic communication (Sassoon 34).

7.1. The decline of handwriting

Traves says that handwriting" was a matter of declining interest to research workers during the first quarter of this century"(399); this means that the research in this area have become increasly rare due to computers advance which have replaced handwriting to a great extent.

Schalagal notice that there are three factors which contribute mainly in the steep decline in handwriting focus:

1. A focus on the writing process; in addition to the meaning of written work.

2. The advance of computer based writing technology.

3. Crowded language arts curriculum (193).

Therefore, handwriting is briefly mentioned in state standards; contemporary research support that" despite the diminished place of handwriting in the curriculum and broad

availability of word processing programs, fluent and legible handwriting remains a necessary practical skill" (Schalagal 194).

Writing composition on the computer maybe can be in side of an advice. Since studies reveals that written composition on word process have been disappointing; due to seven teen research studies by Reay results only seven found great significant quality (247). However, the role of technology cannot be neglected in supporting struggling writers; particularly students with handwriting disabilities and with academic success failure. These technologies are not supposed to replace good writing; instead, it provides scaffolding (National work and Nagin 12).

Technologies such as: word processors, spell checkers, word prediction, and text to speech screen review; scaffolding provides a compensatory function in which permits students to perform at higher levels of proficiency (Berninger and Amtmann 345). Technologies which provide such a compensatory function are named assistive technology; it meant to be used by students with disabilities to improve their functioning on writing tasks.

Handwriting is still one of the most important elements that students acquire and use as a part of their academic progress; when handwriting is deficient and illegible, student struggle various consequences related to their performance and social interaction which results in limiting their participation in everyday school activities (Preminger et al 58).

7.2. The role of handwriting in students' academic success

In order to be an educated person, an individual needs to know how to read coherently and write legibly (Emaikwu 2) however, many students are not performing well because of their poor handwriting which is considered as key factor for student to transmit ideas and knowledge. Since Berninger refers to handwriting as a language by hand this is a useful reminder of its context and purpose (328). Emaikwu asserts that "handwriting is not an isolated activity; neither can it be seen solely as a motor activity" (2) instead it is a part of language activity.

 "Good handwriting in all school subjects even Mathematics is skill that is highly valued in our society" (Emaikwu 2); the benefits of handwriting remains in (a) increasing brain activity, (b) impact performance across all academic subjects, and (c) provide a foundation for higher order skills. Handwriting has been shown to impact neurological processes when

engaged more brain regions than good hand writers (Emaikwu 2). As a result of the study, students who struggle with handwriting are unable in engaging their brains when learning.

Moreover, legible handwriting is necessary for students to carry out many academic activities and handwriting disabilities can affect writing processes such as: planning and generating ideas (Handley 57). In the past handwriting was valued due to it was the first function of communication; people needed legible handwriting to get notes from one another (Ediger 103).

Graham et al asserts that the ability to communicate ones feelings and ideas effectively in written forms which is one of the most important elements in academic success (43-52). Richards put for word "poor handwriting has negative impact on the success of students' progress" (11-25). Many learners are not adequate writers; therefore, they cannot put their knowledge and ideas coherently together or write legibly in exams "because writing is a fundamental means for students to communicate their knowledge in other content areas, it is a crucial skill for success in schools (Harris and Graham 620).

Students who write legibly are those likely to receive low scores than those with legible handwriting despite the content of the text (Sheffield 21); although teachers assume that they spate content from presentation, however Brigges proved the contrast when the content is equated "Students who write badly get lower marks. Handwriting may also influence the way people think about us and in quite serious ways either open doors or limit progress (Sassoon 10-12). Sheffield support that claim and state that "Handwriting quality maybe used, albeit unfairly to judge a students' intelligence or achievement" (22), furthermore, "Teachers' judge and grade students based on the appearance of their work, and the world judges adult on the quality of their handwriting" (Sheffield 24-35).

The findings of low scores evidence have been reported by several researchers that academically, students must communicate their knowledge through writing and it should be clear, neat and legible enough to be evaluated. Therefore, the mastery of handwriting not only appears to facilitate the initial process of learning to write, but may also affect the outcomes of the learning process over time (Graham et al 42-53).

Despite the highly developed technologies, handwriting is a skill that students are required to master because handwriting is still an important skill to learn and a basic

element in all school subjects such as: taking notes, taking tests, and completing assignment.

Conclusion

This chapter highlights the most important elements that concern the writing skill and handwriting. The chapter is divided into two sections; the first section is devoted to the writing skill in which gives illustrations about writing generalities such as: definitions, basic rules of writing, the importance of writing besides to writing with other skills such as reading and speaking. Finally this section deals with EFL writing problems including Anxiety, motivation, self-esteem, and self-confidence. Considering the second section involves definitions of the term handwriting and spotlight on the constituent of handwriting, and then the factors affecting handwriting besides this section illustrate the clarification about the impact of poor handwriting on students' tests scores. Furthermore, it discusses the importance of teaching handwriting and how it is crucial to raise teachers' awareness about handwriting. Since handwriting is an important element, this section deal with handwriting instruction in which improves compositions and promotes success as well as this section shed light on the importance of handwriting and how it is in speed decline and then the role of handwriting in students' academic success.

To sum up whether handwriting or writing skill; both of them need for teachers' awareness and instructions to aide students with handwriting disabilities to achieve success and academic progress since they play a major role in students' performance.

Chapter Two
Testing

Introduction

In higher education testing is a crucial procedure in the learning- teaching process. Tests are a format for measuring student's knowledge; therefore, student have to spend a lot of time and effort getting prepared for evaluations because testing in university is very important to keep student on trail or to evaluate the materials that have being taught.

Tests can be a tool that provides teachers with a measure of learners' abilities within a particular domain due to tests diagnose students strengths and needs, provide feedback on student learning, motivate and focus student's attention and effort, and communicate learning expectation; that is why constructing and designing an effective test is a hard task for teachers to develop skills and knowledge about testing, that is to say, teachers have to design tests which produce scores that reflects their learner's knowledge and skills.

This chapter provides general aspects about testing in education; it handles a clear understanding between assessments, evaluation, and testing in order to differentiate between them, it discusses the different types of tests used in educational system. Moreover, this chapter spots light on the main characteristics of a good test; furthermore, it explains the main stages of designing a test and because multiple choice test and essay test are commonly used, this chapter narrows both of the test items and clarify point of strength and weakness.

1. Definition of tests

Evaluation, Assessment, and Testing are terms used interchangeably to refer to the process of measuring students' ability and knowledge while each term differs from the other; therefore, before defining the term "testing", one has to discriminate between the concepts: Evaluation, Assessment, and testing.

1.1. Evaluation

Evaluation is an intrinsic part of teaching and learning. It is important for teachers because it provides them with useful information that can help them for future direction of classroom practice, for the planning of course, and for the management of learning tasks and students (Dinkins and Germaine 17). Evaluation is a prominent process of assessing, measuring, and testing which aims to improve the educational programs. Evaluation is the systematic gathering of information to make decisions (Bachman 22). Bachman claims that evaluation that requires making value judgments and decisions. Assessment information is

often used to make decisions about selecting and placement and to provide grades or marks (9).

1.2. Assessment

Brown claims that" any respond to a question, a comment, a trail of a new word or structure of a learner, or other written or oral activities from a learner make the teacher assess and judge his performance"(4). Bachman also states that:" Assessment can draw information from a wide range of elicitation, observation, and data collection procedures including multiple-choice tests, extended responses such as essays and portfolios, questionnaires, oral interviews, introspections, and observations. The result of assessments can be reported both quantitatively, as numbers, such as test scores, ratings, or rankings and qualitatively, as verbal descriptions, or as visual or audio images (8). (Zachos 748) argues that" assessment is the process of obtaining evidence to support inferences concerning the attainment of learning objectives".

There are two important types of assessment which are:

1.2.1. Formative assessment

This type of assessment collects information about learners' performance using different methods and techniques such as: check- lists, self-assessment, focused observation for the purpose of measuring and improving the proficiency. (O'Malley and Pierce 11) states that "formative assessment is the one that takes place during a course of teaching and it is used essentially as a feedback to the teaching process"; "formative assessment is the short term collection and use of evidence to guide learning". Formative assessment may or may not contribute to the final mark but it still a judgment about the learners' performance.

1.2.2. Summative assessment

Summative assessment occurs at the end of a course to indicate whether or not the learner has passed. In other words, it is the summary of students' achievement in a particular time. Generally at the end of a term or at the end of school year, summative assessment uses tests, quizzes, assignment and project work. However, some researchers do not differentiate between the two "some educational researchers say that the stark distinction between formative and summative assessment does not really exist" (Ramsden 212-213).

1.3. Testing

Bachman 21 defines a test as "measurement instrument" furthermore test is a type of measurement which is designed to obtain a specific sample of behavior. Testing is an activity that uses test to measure and determine a learner' abilities by following certain system in order to find out how well a learning subject is progressing and what level of knowledge has been acquired. A test in simple terms is a method of measuring a person's ability; knowledge, or performance in a given domain (Brown 3).

2. Types of testing

Teachers must choose the appropriate test's type which serves the determined purposes before designing a test. Davies and Pearse states that "the use of English language test is to gather reliable evidence about the abilities of the learners and their knowledge about the language for several reasons which control the type of the test" (171); There are five types of testing which are: placement test, diagnostic test, achievement test, language aptitude test, and proficiency test.

2.1. Placement test

This type of tests provides information about students' abilities in order to place them at "The most appropriate stage" of the teaching program (Hughes 16). Brown states that "the purpose of the placement test is to place a student into a particular level or section of a language curriculum or school" (45). The placement tests determine the level of a learner in which s/he should be located inside a program; (Davies and Pearse 171) agree and declare that this type of test is crucial in large institutions that frequently receive new students.

2.2. Diagnostic test

It is a test which looks backwards rather than forward. Diagnostic test used to assess learners' knowledge before starting a course. Hughes claims that diagnostic test is used to identify learners' strengths and weaknesses; it is aimed to discover what is needed in learning to take place. Moreover, diagnostic test help teachers to adjust and modify their teaching according to the needs of the group and individual learner (15). Davies and Pearse the significance of diagnostic test appears in:

- Revealing what students already know and do not know about a subject so that the teacher can design lessons appropriately.
- Exposing misunderstanding in the prior knowledge (171).

2.3. Achievement test

It is a type of test done at the end of a term, semester, or year. It provides information about the language taught to learners during a certain period of time as well as their abilities in all four skills and their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Its outcomes determine the class that the learner will be placed in next year (Harmer 166). According to Brown "achievement test has a direct relation to classroom lessons, units, or even a total curriculum." He states that it can diagnose what students need to work on in the future. In addition, the role of achievement test is to determine whether course objectives have been achieved and learners have acquired the knowledge and the skills or not.

Davies and Pearse suggest five types of tests which are: placement test, diagnostic test, progress test, course test, and proficiency test. They clarify that the "progress tests" refer to "short- term" achievement test, and they state that their purpose is to check how well learners are doing after each lesson or unit, and provide consolidation or remedial work if necessary. Furthermore, the course test refers to "longer-term" achievement tests which check how learners have done over a whole course. Progress test are rarely used by classroom teachers. Both achievement tests and progress tests are similar because they are based on a syllabus and measure that have been learnt (172).

2.4. Language aptitude tests

Brown asserts that "language aptitude test is designed to measure capacity or general ability to learn a foreign language and ultimate success in that undertaking. Language aptitude tests are ostensibly designed to apply to the classroom learning of any language" (43); in other words language aptitude test measure learners' performance and ability to learn a new language. Heaton state that language aptitude as a complex subject consists of various factors which are: intelligence, age, motivation, memory, phonological sensitivity and sensitivity to grammatical pattering. These factors differ from one individual to another. Besides, he claim that it is neither possible nor desirable to take a collectively measurement of language aptitude. In a word, this type of test is designed to predict a learner's future success in a language environment (173).

2.5. Proficiency tests

Davies and Pearse assert that this type of tests is "to determine learners' levels in relation to generally accepted standards" (172). That is to say, these proficiency tests are supposed to indicate student's level at any one time. They are used by employers and universities who search for reliable measure of a student Language abilities (Harmer 166). Heaton write that "whereas an achievement test looks back on what should have been learnt, the proficiency with reference to a particular task which he or she will be acquired to perform" (174).

3. Characteristics of a good test

It is not an easy task to design a test that is fair and meaningful especially for some inexperienced teachers who think that testing is putting some questions to solve. However, designing a test requires both science and art. (Pointek 1)

Good tests have some characteristics to fallow. According to Bachman language test can be classified in terms of five characteristics:

- ➤ Tests can be distinguished according to their intended use, such as selection, entrance, readiness, placement, diagnosis, progress, attainment, and mastery.
- ➤ Tests can differ in content; achievement tests are based on syllabus, while a proficiency test derives from theory of language ability.
- ➤ Different frames of reference can provide the basis for test development and score interpretation. Norm referenced tests are developed to maximize differences among individual test takers and a test score is interpreted in relation to the score of the test takers.
- ➤ Tests can be classified according to the scoring procedure (the act or process of evaluating responses to test situation or evaluating characteristics of whomever or whatever is being rated, scoring objective tests is purely mechanical process which requires no special skills).
- ➤ Test may employ different testing methods, such as dictation, cloze, multiple choice, completion, composition, and interview (119).

In addition to Bachman classification, there is other characteristic teachers must take it into considerations which are:

3.1. Validity

Lado 321 asked:" does a test measure what is supposed to measure? If it does, it is valid" Cronbach agree and state that "every time an educator asks, but what does the instrument really measure? He is calling for information on constructing validity" (463); In other words, the question teachers must ask themselves is does my test measure what I think it does? If it does so, the test is valid. Harmer states "a good test is valid" (167). Validity is the extent to which inferences made from assessment results are appropriate, meaningful, and useful in terms of the purpose of the assessment (Brown 22). Furthermore, validity is also about test scores as Weir explains by saying" validity is perhaps better defined as the extent, to which a test can be shown to produce data, that is to say, test scores which are an accurate representation of a candidate's level of language knowledge or skills." (12). Moreover, validity has various types such as:

3.1.1. Context validity

Context validity is concerned with the extent to which the choice of tasks of which the test is assumed to be a sample (Weir 19). If a test actually samples the subject matter about which conclusions are to be drawn. And if it requires the test-taker to perform the behavior that is being measured, it can claim content-related evidence of validity, often popularly referred to as content validity (Brown 22). However, Boyle asserts that content validity is concerned with the degree to which a test is fairly representing the intended measure (66). I a word, test designers or teachers must test materials that have been taught; otherwise, the test will be considered invalid and unfair.

3.1.2. Scoring validity

According to Weir "scoring validity concerns the extent to which test results are stable overtime, consistent in terms of the content sampling and free from bias"(23). In other words, it is the degree to which examination marks are free from errors of measurement.

3.1.3. Construct validity

Construct validity is" any theory, hypothesis, or model that attempts to explain, observed phenomena in our universe of perceptions" (Brown 25). In addition, Boyle asserts that construct validity is the extent of measuring the fundamental concepts by test. That is to

say, in order to construct a test, educators should take into consideration his/her learners' behavior and mental organization because it is the base of designing any test.

3.1.4. Criterion-related validity

Brown asserts "criterion-related validity is the extent to which the criterion of test has actually been reached" (24). Weir claims that it is connected with test scores; criterion-related validity means that the test provides the same results of another test that is designed to measure the same outcomes (36). In brief, criterion-related validity or as it is known as "criterion-related evidence"; deals with the results gained from two different performances of the same test and whether they are similar or not.

3.2. Reliability

The term reliability can be viewed as synonym of validity in terms of terminology; however, they are completely different concepts. Reliability means that students will receive the same scores of different forms of the same test (Wells 2). Bachman argues that reliability is the "consistency of measurement", In other words, reliability is simply the degree to which an assessment tool produces stable and consistent results (5).

Mousavi (2002) writes that, the unreliability of a test can be because of various factors such as:

3.2.1. Student-related reliability

It can be caused by physical or psychological factors for instance: fatigue, anxiety, illness, and the like.

3.2.2. Rater reliability

That can be due to subjectivity, lack of attention, lack of experience, human error, and so on.

3.2.3. Test administration reliability

It can be caused by the conditions while the test is administered like: photocopying, variations in temperature and other causes even the conditions of desks and chairs.

3.2.4. Test reliability

This can be caused by the test itself for example: the length of the test.

To sum up, test unreliability can be caused by several factors which have relation to the students themselves, teachers, the administration or even the test itself.

3.3. Practicality

Brown asserts that a good test is practical when it:

- Is not very expensive.
- Stays within appropriate time constraints.
- Is relatively easy to administer.
- Has a scoring/evaluation procedure that is specific and time-efficient (19).

Harmer affirms that by saying "we need to work out how long it will take both to sit the test and also to market" (167). In a word, designing a good test require teachers to take "the time" into consideration because test should fit the allocated time of designing, administering, and scoring in order to be practical.

3.4. Authenticity

Authenticity is the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test task to the features of a target language task (Bachman and Palmer 23). Brown state some ways in order to presents authenticity through:
- ✓ Making language natural as possible.
- ✓ Using contextualized items rather than the isolated ones.
- ✓ Using meaningful topics for learners.
- ✓ Organizing items thematically such as a story line or episode.
- ✓ Using tasks similar to the real-world tasks.

3.5. Language appropriateness

"The language demands will be clear and appropriate to the assessment tasks and to students" (Clay and Root 9). Test questions must reflect the language used inside classroom. It should be simple, clear, and free of nonfunctional material and clues. Furthermore, tests must avoid race, ethnic. In brief, all these latter factors effects student's language background and impact their performance on tests.

3.6. Fairness

"Student performance will be measured in a way that does not give advantage factors irrelevant to school learning" (Clay and Root 10); Tests should reflect the lessons have been taught to the students; expectations should be clearly known by the student. They add "grading constructively requires the instructor to provide feedback (written or oral) that helps the students to appreciate what they achieved and what did not achieved by taking the test. This feedback could include the following: encouraging comments on a test or paper that convey respect for what the student attempted to accomplish; praise for what the student did accomplish and suggestions or improving performance" (10).

4. Test designing

Many teachers found that constructing a test which motivate students and help them to make better assessment and fair scoring; is one the most challenging tasks. However, most of instructors use tests which they have prepared by themselves based on their experience; lack of experience for new teachers may lead to undesirable effects, therefore, some research studies proved that experience is the most crucial factor in the field of designing tests.

4.1. Stages of designing a test

There are three main stages which are:

4.1.1. Planning

In this stage teacher sets outline for the test, list topics, and cast ideas for items and material collection. However, teachers should take in account the characteristics of students such as: their age, gender, social situation, educational situation, mother tongue…and the like. Whatever the purpose of the test is (school-leaving certificate, formative or diagnostic function…) Tests, educational context, and the standards relationship should be followed for the purposed purpose and how results should be used.

4.1.2. Composition

This stage covers the composition of actual items and choice for objectivity. In a word, the purpose of this stage is providing test materials which are made according to the test specification.

4.1.3. Analysis

The analysis is supposed to determine the difficulties and discriminate test items, that is to say, instructors need to have predictions about the student's level and the appropriate methods that give the test reliability and fairness.

4.2. Preparing, Assembling, and administering effective test

How can we prepare and assemble a test more effectively? It is an important question teachers ask themselves whenever they decide to evaluate, diagnose their students. However, careful planning could help test designer to prepare and assemble test more effectively by following these guidelines that will allow test takers to take the test with minimum difficulty:

❖ Provide general directions, the amount of time allowed for the test, and how it will be scored by appropriate spacing or different type style.

❖ If the test consist several types of items, try to arrange them systematically such as: multiple choice items together besides, providing a clear set of direction, for each group items.

❖ Arrange the most difficult questions and place them at the end of the test so that student has time to measure more questions.

❖ Teachers should make sure that all test copies are legible and free of typographical or grammatical errors.(Zimmerman et al 5)

4.3. Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives

A group of educational psychologists decided it would be useful to classify different levels of understanding that students can achieve in a course, and after extensive research on educational goals. Dr. Benjamin S. Bloom, lists six levels of intellectual understanding (Clay and Root 7)

4.3.1. Knowledge

This level is based on recognizing and recalling information, including dates, events, persons, places, items, definitions, facts, principles, theories, methods and procedures by asking simple questions(who, what, where…)

4.3.2. Comprehension

Understanding the meaning of information, including restating, translating from one form to another; or interpreting, explaining, and summarizing for example:

- Restate in your own words….?

4.3.3. Application

Applying general rules, methods, or principles to a new situation including classifying something as a specific example of a general principle of using a formula to solve a problem for instance: -How is….an example of…?

-How is…..related to…..?

4.3.4. Analysis

Identifying the organization and patterns within a system by identifying its component parts and the relationships among the components such as:

- Classify…..according to…..
- What are the parts of ……?

4.3.5. Synthesis

Discovering/ creating new connections, generalizations, patterns, or perspectives, combining ideas to form a new whole. For example:

- What would you infer form…..?
- What ideas can you add to…..?

4.3.6. Evaluation

Using evidence and reasoned argument to judge how well a proposal would accomplish a particular purpose, resolving controversies or differences of opinion. For instance:

-Do you agree….?

- What priority would you give….?

5. Multiple choice questions and Essay questions

In higher education, teachers use different test format in order to measure their students' knowledge and abilities, Essay test and Multiple choice question are the more two types used by university teachers, therefore, each one of this type will be illustrated in the coming points.

5.1. Multiple choice tests

5.1.1. Definitions

Huges defines that "multiple choice question test is a test that requires choosing the correct or appropriate option"(76). Clay and Root claim that "the multiple choice item consists of the stem which identifies the question or problem and the responses, alternatives, or choices" (13) for instance: **Item stem:** *which of the following is a chemical change?*

Response alternatives: *A-Evaporation of alcohol.*

B- Freezing water.

C- Burning of oil.

D- Melting of wax.

In other words, students are asked to select or choose one alternative that best completes a statement or answers a question. Moreover, this type of test item is considered to be the most versatile of all item types because they can be used to test factual recall as well as levels of understanding and ability to apply learning. Clay and Root affirm that "multiple choice tests can be used to test ability to: -Recall memorized information.

-Apply theory to routines cases.

-Apply theory to novel situations.

-Use judgment in analyzing and   evaluating." (13)

5.1.2. Types of multiple choice test

There are three different types which are:

_Question/ right answer; the student need to choose the correct answer among different options which has been given by the teacher.

_Incomplete statement; this type usually used in definitions or famous saying.

_Best answer; this type depends on the students understanding and ability to select the best answer.

5.1.3. Designing a good multiple choices test items

Many researchers have proposed a numerous instructions that may help teachers to design a multiple choice question test because this latter is considered to be a hard task especially for inexperienced teachers, therefore, in order to measure student's level appropriately Clay and Root proposed some guidelines to design effective multiple choice stems and alternatives:

- Avoid irrelevant clues such as grammatical structure.

- Use four alternatives for each item in order to lower the probability of getting the item correct by guessing.

- Try to keep all alternative in similar format (phrases or sentences).

- Try to make alternatives for item in the same length.

- Meaningful, determined stem presents clear question or problem, will help students concentrate on learning rather than making inferences from broad descriptions.

- State the stem in a form of a direct question rather than incomplete sentence as a consequence, the student will focus on answering the question rather than completing the sentence because partial sentence encourage students to use memorization to complete the incomplete stem.

- Use misconceptions students have indicated in class or errors commonly made by students in the class as the basis for incorrect alternatives.

- The alternatives should be plausible otherwise; alternatives cannot serve the function of distracters besides it should be attractive to the less knowledgeable or skillful student.

- Negative stems should be stated sparingly when used, underline or capitalize the negative word such as: *which of the following is Not cited as an accomplishment of the Kennedy administration?*

- State the stem in the form of a direct question rather an incomplete sentence.

- Stems should be precise and concise; in brief it should not include extra information because it may affect the reliability and validity of scoring (15).

5.1.4. Scoring a multiple question test

Multiple choice questions are more preferable to students because it is more reliable since the correct answer is clear and determined. Conventional assessment consists of two of

the most used methods for MCQ assessment which are: Number right scoring (NR) and Negative marking (NM). (NR) scoring method correct answers are scored with positive value, incorrect, absent, or omitted answers with a value of zero. The sum of the scores for correct responses is the test scores (Lesage et al 189). Point of weakness of this method is students can answer positively and teachers do not known if it is an answer based on understanding and knowledge or just guessing (Lessage et al, 189).

The second method is Negative marking (NM) or "right minus wrong" the objective behind this model is that student will lose marks for incorrect answer as a result of their guessing and this might discourage student and increase reliability and validity because test scores is a reflection of a student's ability. "The penalty for an incorrect answer should be 1/ (n-1), where n stands for the number of choices" (Lessag et al 189) in other words, the total of scores should zero when student guess randomly. But many researchers write that this method has not solved the problem completely. In other hand, many scientists try to find solutions to the issue of guessing and they come up with Non-Conventional scoring method which takes into account partial knowledge mastery.

Despite the fact that student cannot always know the correct answer, they can often determine that some of the choices options are clearly incorrect. "A way to overcome this short coming is to develop methods that allow a more accurate measurement of student knowledge" calls' partial-credit scoring" (Lessag et al 190), which consist of three main formats:

- The liberal multiple choice (selecting more than one answer to a question)
- Eliminating test (ET) (cross out all incorrect alternatives)
- Confidence weighting (CW) (indicate the correct answer, how confident they are about their choices) (Lessage et al 190).

5.1.5. Advantages and disadvantages of multiple choice test

"Understand that there is always one clearly best answer. My goal is not to trick students or require them to make difficult judgments about two options that are nearly equally correct: My goal is to design questions that students who understand will answer correctly and students who do not understand will answer incorrectly" (Weir 19).

(Clay and Root 13), (Zimmar 11), and (Swift 7) set some points of weakness and strengths of multiple choice questions which are:

5.1.5.1. ADVANTAGES

-Versatile at all levels.

- Very effective.

-Minimum of writing for student.

-Can cover broad range of content.

-It can measure learning outcomes from simple to complex.

- Scoring MCQ is more reliable than subjective test; it is fair, quick, and easy.

- It provides diagnostic information from incorrect alternatives.

5.1.5.2. DISADVANTAGES

- It encourages guessing which influences the reliability of scoring.
- It is easy to cheat especially in large classes.
- Teacher cannot obtain feedback on students thought processes because it is difficult to determine why students choose the wrong answers.
- Difficult to construct good test items.
- Difficult to come up with plausible distracters/ alternative response.

5.2. Essay tests

5.2.1. Definitions

"Essay test usually consists of a small number of questions to which the student is expected to recall and organize knowledge in logical, integrated answer"(Clay and Root 38). That is to say, students are supposed to construct their answers in more than one sentence; Reiner affirms that by saying: "A test item which requires a response composed by the examinee, usually in the form of one or more sentences, of a nature that no single response or pattern of responses can be listed as correct, and the accuracy and quality of which can be judged subjectively only by one skilled or informed in the subject" (6). In a word, students are supposed to compose their answers based on materials they have learned not guessing and select answers from options provided by the teacher.

5.2.2. Types of essay tests

There are two main types of essay test which are:

5.2.2.1. Extended response

In this type students are free to write, however, teachers provide some instructions.

5.2.2.2. Restricted response

In this type the student should follow an outline that is provided by the teacher.

5.2.3. Designing essay tests

Essay tests is easier than multiple choice question in designing but in order to design an effective essay test teachers should follow some guidelines which (Clay and Root 41- 42) have proposed to help them to evaluate student's abilities correctly:

- Essay questions should be formulated in way that the task is clearly defined for the student because words such as "discuss" and "explain" can be ambiguous; teacher should give specific instruction to what point should be discussed or explained.
- Teachers should avoid optional questions for the following reasons, first students will lose time deciding what to choose, second it makes it difficult to discriminate among students who can answer all the questions and those who can answer only one or two, third it also affect the reliability of the scoring. Moreover, students may not study all the test materials if they know about choices among the questions.
- Teachers goals should be writing essay items that measure higher cognitive processes; items should tests the student ability to use knowledge to analyze, justify, contract and so on each question is measuring for cognitive skill "classify them according to Bloom's taxonomy".
- Teachers should allocate the appropriate time for students. The time should fit the requirement of the questions. (It is helpful to give students guidelines on how much time to use on each question, as well as the desired length and format of the response).

5.2.4. Scoring essay tests

In order to maintain objectivity and fairness in scoring essay test and to make sure that essays with equal quality are given the same number of points. Teachers should be aware of the two approaches of scoring essay items (1) analytical or point method and (2) holistic or rating method. (Clay and Root 42) presents more details for the two methods in the following:

5.2.4.1. Analytical method

This method require teachers to prepare an "ideal answer" which provide the major components students are asked to demonstrate then teachers" read and compare"; Clay and Root claim that "If all the necessary element are present, the student receives the maximum number of points"(42). In brief if teachers compare students answer with the model answer and if the necessary elements are found then the student receives marks based on the number of the required elements.

5.2.4.2. Holistic method

In this method, student's answers are taking as a whole. (Clay and Root 42) affirm that by saying "considering the student's answer as a whole and judging the total quality of the answer relative to other student responses or the total quality of the answer based on certain criteria that you develop". That is to say, teachers grade their students both by the whole quality of the answer according to other students or based on some criteria they have put.

Essay tests are still unreliable in scoring due to the subjectivity of judgments. Therefore, no matter what the scoring procedure, it is important to use a grading key or establish a standard set of rules for assigning points for each question such as covering the student name while scoring, or ask someone else to rescore (Zimmerman et al 12)

5.2.5. Advantages and disadvantages of essay tests

5.2.5.1. Advantages

Clay and Root set some advantages of essay tests which are:

1. They are less time consuming to prepare than any other item type.
2. Students are given the opportunity to use their own judgment, writing styles, and vocabularies.
3. Students less likely to guess.
4. Stimulates more study.
5. Allow students to demonstrate ability, to organize knowledge, express opinion, and show originality (38).

5.2.5.2. Disadvantages

Clay and Root also set some disadvantages of essay tests which are:

1. Essay items provide student the opportunity for bluffing, rambling, therefore, it is not efficient for assessing knowledge of basic facts.
2. Can limit amount of materials tested due to the time required for students to respond.
3. Essay items are pitfalls for students who tend to go off on tangents or misunderstand the main point of the question.
4. Time consuming to score.

5-This type require students who possess good writing skill and neatness.

6. The role of testing in the learning/ teaching process

Test plays a crucial role in the learning teaching process besides to its major impact in the Educational system; therefore, no one can ignore the significant roles of testing.

Numerous researchers have affirmed that "a test has a great role, especially in language learning; it is a means to show both students and teachers how much the learner have learnt during a course" (Hicks 155). That is to say, in order to identify and measure students' knowledge and abilities, diagnose issues related to students; instructors have to test them to see whether the materials that have been taught are making a progress or not. Moreover, tests are not made for just diagnosing and evaluating students' achievement but also, it is considered as motivators. Clay and Root state that "well constructed tests motivate students and reinforce learning" they also add that "well constructed tests enable teachers to assess the students' mastery of course objective. Test also provides feedback on teaching, often showing what was or was not communicated clearly"(3).

In other words, tests have an impact on the learning process as well as the teaching process in way that, it identifies gaps and mistakes in teacher's knowledge Heaton claim that "tests could be used to display the strength and weaknesses of the teaching process and help the teacher to improve it"(6). Testing provides teachers with the needed information about what the student knows and what does not know and make them work in order to improve their methods or approaches of teaching. In a word, the improvement of the teaching process is based on the learner's performance on tests. Additionally, frequent testing encourages students to study Clay and Root write that "frequent testing helps students to avoid getting behind, provides instructors with multiple sources of information to use in computing the final

course grade (3). This means that it is crucial to test various topics to give students regular feedback besides students will expect that as a result they will study with this expectation.

To sum up, test plays a great role in the Educational system, Furthermore, in the learning-teaching process since its encourage and motivate students to study and to be successful as well as it provides teachers with the efficient knowledge about their student's abilities and skills and the appropriate approaches and methods for better measurement.

Conclusion

This chapter shed lights the most crucial points about testing which plays an important role in the learning and teaching process as it is one of the most complicated tasks for both teachers and learners because the success or failure of the students depends on the quality of tests and its usefulness, therefore, this chapter identifies the most important terms that have relationship with testing; these are: evaluation, assessment, and testing. Then characteristics such as validity, reliability, practicality, authenticity, and fairness are guidelines should be respected by teachers to design a good test that measure and evaluates learners level's appropriately and types of tests such as: placement test, diagnostic test, achievement, language aptitude, and proficiency tests; besides to the role of testing in the educational system and the teaching-learning process.

Furthermore, it involves description and clarification of the process of designing and determining a good test and the most important stages instructors go through, moreover, it narrows to the points of" Multiple choice test and Essay test" since they are the most used by teachers; this chapter illustrate clarification about the two items and their points of weakness and strength.

To conclude, testing is a crucial procedure for teachers since it provides them with reliable information about their learners' abilities; it also reflects their level of understanding the materials that have been taught and effectiveness of methods teachers are following.

Chapter Three
Field Work

Introduction

This chapter includes the collected data. One questionnaire was submitted to teachers of English section at Mohammed Kheider University of Biskra in order to collect information which will be analyzed adequately. The purpose of this analysis is answering the addressed questions of this study, essentially about teachers' point of view towards handwriting and whether it affects the final score of the students. In order to obtain valid answers by using questionnaire; the descriptive design was selected. The collected data is presented in tables and graphs.

1. Data collection procedure

One questionnaire is designed to teachers of English at Mohammed Kheider University of Biskra. The purpose of this questionnaire is to describe teachers' perspectives toward handwriting and their attitudes towards students' final score in relation to poor handwriting as to show the main difficulties that face teachers when correcting exam papers with poor legibility.

2. Selecting the sample

The selected population consists of teachers of English at Mohammed Kheider University of Biskra. The aim behind selecting this population is that teachers have experienced throughout years of teaching a lot of poor legibility which make them aware of students' problems so, their answers will be more reliable.

3. Description and administration of teacher's questionnaire

The questionnaire is designed to twelve English teachers at Mohammed Kheider University of Biskra. The purpose of questionnaire is to collect data about teachers' point of view towards handwriting and to recognize the main issues that face teachers when correcting and scoring tests' papers with poor handwriting. The questionnaire involves eighteen questions grouped in four sections and presented in six pages.

Twelve copies are handed to twelve teachers; however, only ten copies are collected.

Section one

Personal Information: (Q1-Q2)

The purpose of this section is to collect data about teachers' degree and their teaching experience in the university.

Section two

Testing: (Q3-Q8)

This section provides information about teachers' perspectives toward test generalities. (Q3) seeks to know the importance of tests and (Q4) aims to know if tests reflect students real level with explaining the reason, knowing if teachers inform their students about test format and asking for the reason is the aim of (Q5); while, (Q6) asks them to choose the type of test they prefer to use whether is Multiple choice test, essay test, or both of them. In (Q7) teachers are required to answer whether MCQ test and essay test measure the same content and ability; they are also asked to provide some explanation if yes or not. (Q8) seeks to know teachers' point view to define which type of test they find difficult to correct.

Section three

The writing skill and handwriting: (Q9-Q18)

In this section, teachers are asked to give their point of view toward students writing skill and handwriting. The ability of students to write in English is the purpose of (Q9); in (Q10) asks them about aspects which they focus more on when they correct: grammatical structure, coherence and cohesion, or both of them. The data collected from (Q11) is whether teachers agree or disagree about taking handwriting as an important element that needs focus; coming to (Q12) teachers are asked if they take handwriting in consideration when correcting in both cases teachers are required to provide some explanation. In (Q13) seeks to know teachers opinion of legible handwriting: compulsory, preferable, or optional they also required to provide explanation; Knowing if poor handwriting cause problem for teachers when correcting is the aim of (Q14) besides providing some explanation.

In (Q15) teachers are asked to answer whether handwriting matters when giving the final score in addition to some explanation; in (Q16) teachers are asked to answer if they make comments about their student's handwriting and provides some comments which they have made. Teachers are asked to provide the reason that makes handwriting

helpful for students whether is: making teachers at ease when correcting, it affects the final score, or both of them is the purpose of (Q17). Finally, in (Q18) asks teachers whether they encourage their students to improve their handwriting in addition they are required to provide some explanation.

Section four Suggestion and comments

 In this section; teachers are asked to write their suggestion and comments about the topic.

4. Analysis and discussion of teachers' questionnaire

4.1. Section one: personal information

Q1: Please specify your degree?

Options	Numbers	%
License	1	10
Master	0	0
Magister	7	70
Doctorate	2	20
Total	10	100

**Table1: Teachers' Educational degree**
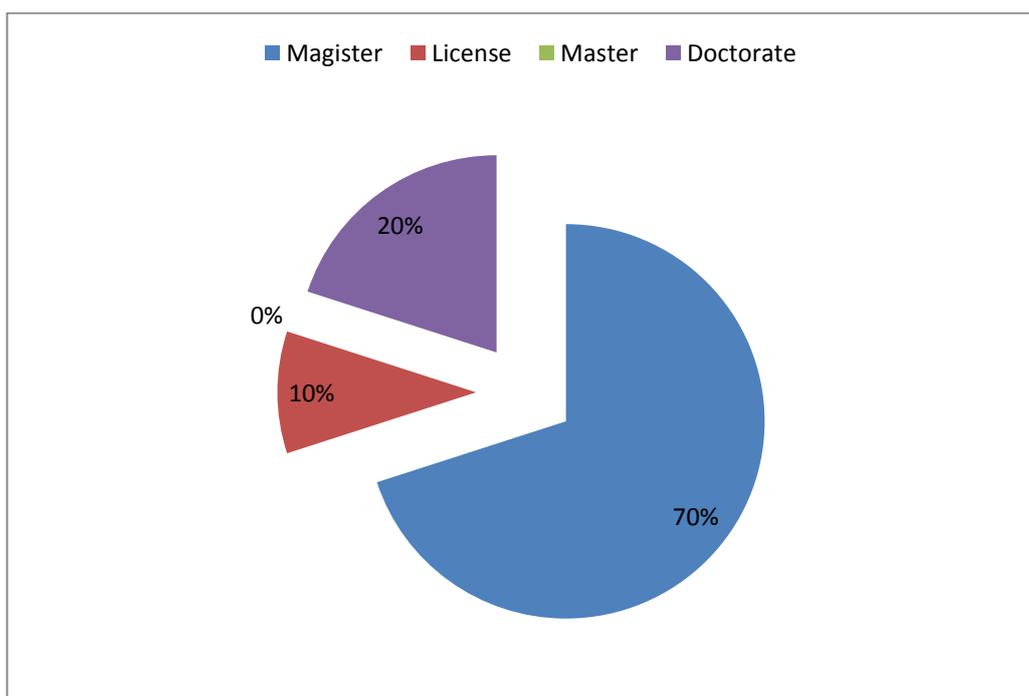
Graph1: Teachers' Educational degree

Results show that 70% of teachers hold Magister degree and 20% of them hold Doctorate degree in addition, 10% of teachers hold License degree; while, no teacher with master degree is teaching. These results reveals that teaching university students demands high level that has a crucial role in teaching and testing university level.

Q2: How many years have you been teaching English at the university?

Options	Numbers	%
10 Years	2	20
1-7 Years	8	80
Total	10	100

Table2: Teachers' experience of teaching at university
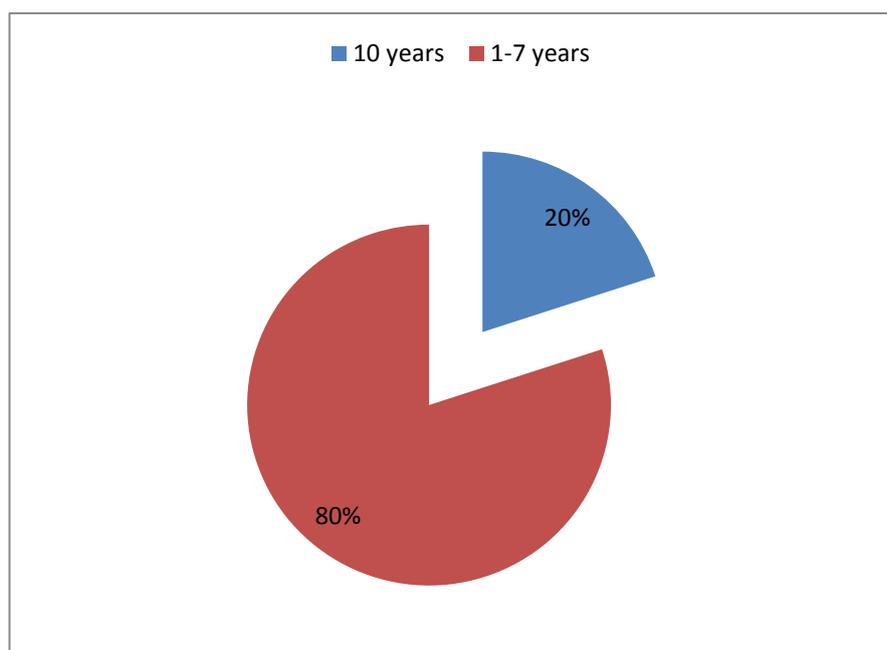
Graph2: Teachers' experience of teaching

80% of teachers have been teaching at university for seven years, 20% of them have been teaching for ten years. This indicates that teachers have a long experience in teaching; the experience makes teachers patience when correcting students' poor handwriting.

4.2. Section two

Testing

Q3: As a teacher, do you think that tests are important in a way that?

Options	Numbers	%
Identifies students weakness and strength	1	10
A tool to improve students skills and abilities	0	0
Both	9	90
Total	10	100

**Table3: The importance of tests**
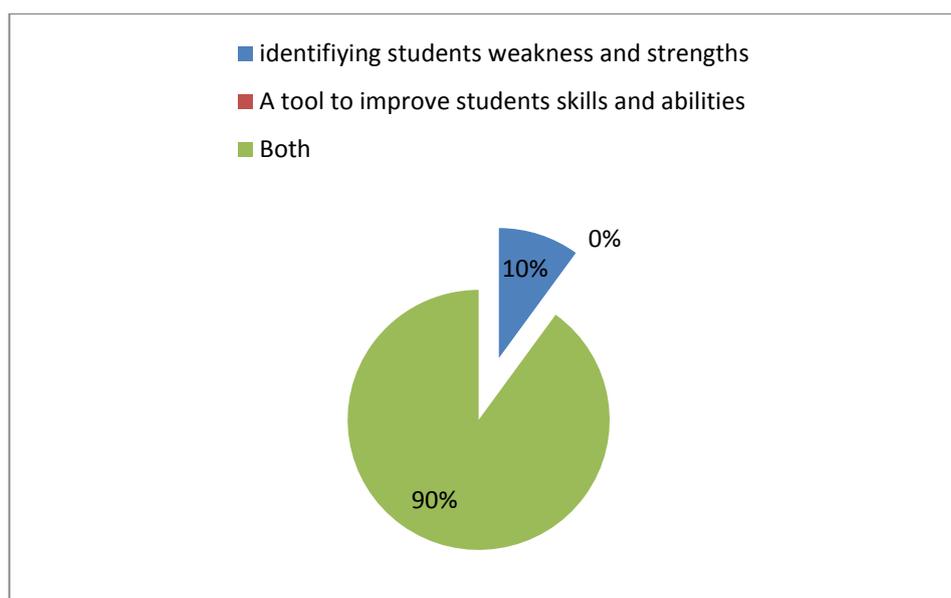
Graph3: The importance of tests

The majority of teachers (90%) think that the importance of tests remains in both options where as only 10% of them agree with the first option which is identifying students weakness and strengths; however, no one of them chooses the second option. These results indicate that teachers are aware of the important role tests play in students' educational development.

Q4: Do tests reflect the real level of your students?

Options	Numbers	%
Yes	3	30
NO	7	70
Total	10	100

Table 4: Test reflecting the real level of students
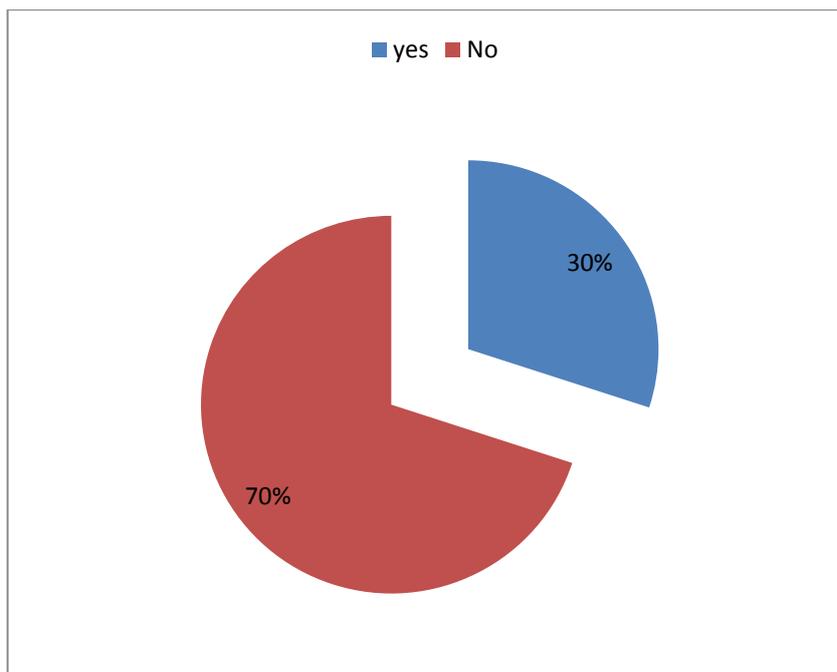
**Graph4: Tests reflecting real level of students**

70% of teachers agree with the idea that tests do not reflect the real level of students due to factors such as: Anxiety, luck of preparation, and stress before and during exams prevents them to perform as expected; furthermore, test do not cover all the points taught in class and do not reveal all students capacities. Moreover, there is the case of "cheating" good answers can be a result of stealing some learners work where as 30% of teachers agree that tests can reflect learners real level throughout results.

Q5: Is it important to tell your students about the test format before exams?

Options	Numbers	%
Yes	8	80
No	2	20

Total	10	100

Table 5: Informing students about the test format
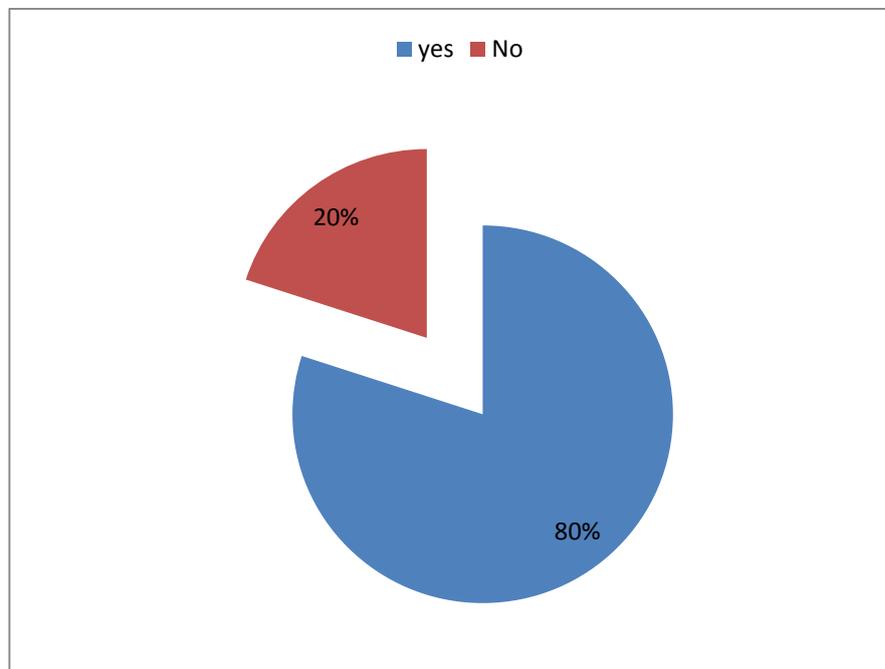
**Graph5: Informing students about the test format**

Most of teachers (80%) inform their students about test format before exams. According to teachers, informing students about test format helps them to achieve better and lower the exam stress by avoiding bad surprises in addition, students can prepare themselves psychologically to answer according to the format as a result they feel ready and successes when taking the exam whereas (20%) of teachers do not inform their students about test format because they find that tests will lose its value and make questions predictable.

Q6: Which type of tests you prefer to use?

Options	Numbers	%
Multiple choice question test	0	0
Essay tests	4	40

Combination of both	6	60
Total	10	100

Table6: The preferable type of test used by teachers
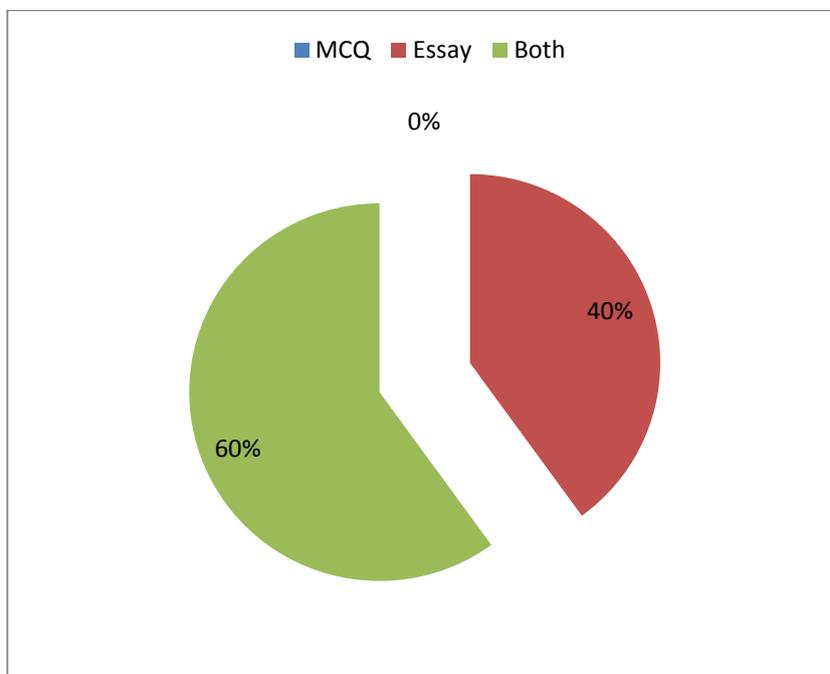
**Graph6: The preferable type of test used by teachers**

The majority of teachers (60%) prefer to use both types of tests which are MCQ tests and Essay tests due to learners differences and learning styles both types produces different issues and require different answers; furthermore, using both MCQ test and Essay test reach all learners styles and test learners knowledge as well as mastery of language. 40% of teachers use only essay tests because they evaluate the real level of students and reflects their competences.

Q7: Do you think that Essay tests and MCQ tests measure the same content and ability

Options	Numbers	%
Yes	0	0
No	10	100

Total	10	100

Table 7: MCQ test and Essay test
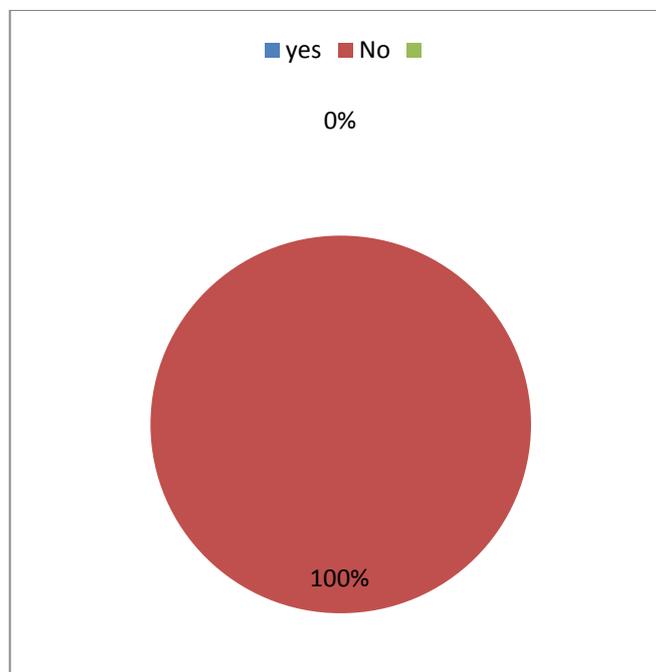

Graph7: Essay tests and MCQ

The graph shows that (100%) of teachers asserts that essay tests and MCQ tests do not measure the same content and ability. Teachers claim that Essay tests are for writing and comprehension as well as measures productive skills and creativity; therefore, students must show good command of knowledge since Essay tests require more concentration (coherence, cohesion, unity, and mechanics) where as MCQ tests requires retaining knowledge of the content they already received; furthermore, MCQ tests are for intelligence and reflex ion and students has just to tick the appropriate answer without making an effort in writing besides most of MCQ answers are randomly chosen by learners but writing Essays nothing is done randomly by chance.

Q8: In your opinion, which type of tests you find difficult to correct?

Options	Numbers	%
Essay tests	8	80
MCQ tests	0	0

Both of them	0	0
None of them	2	20
Total	10	100

Table8: The correction of tests
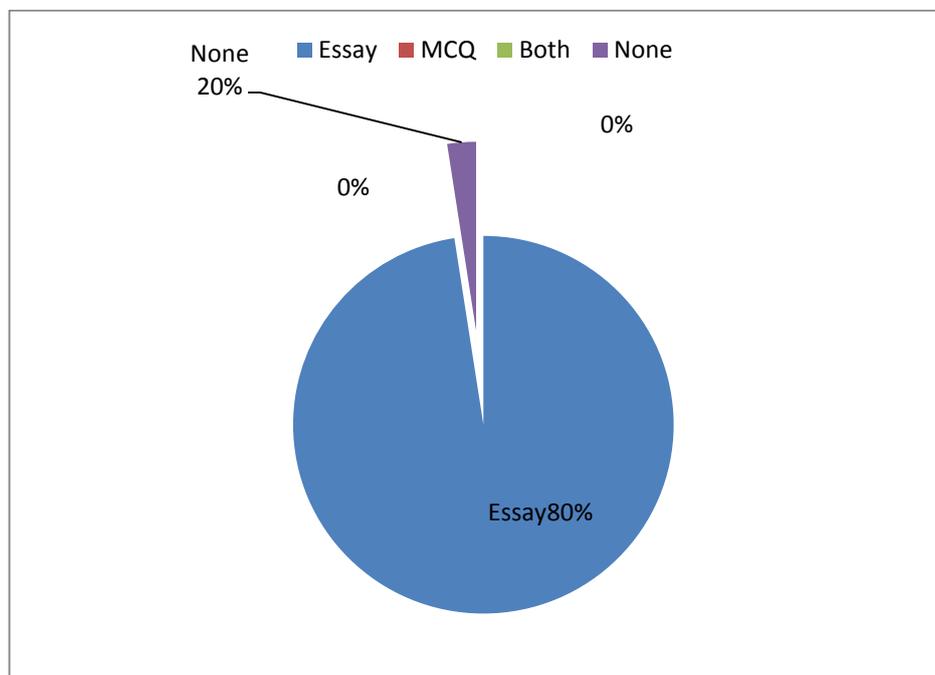
Graph8: The correction of tests

The data obtained determine that (80%) of teachers find correcting and scoring Essay tests are difficult task. 20% of teachers asserts that scoring Whether MCQ test or Essay test is not a hard task this may be due to their experience in teaching.

4.3. Section three

The Writing skill and handwriting

Q9: What do you think of your students writing skill?

Options	Numbers	%
Good	2	20
Average	7	70
Bad	1	10
Total	10	100

Table 9: Students' level of writing
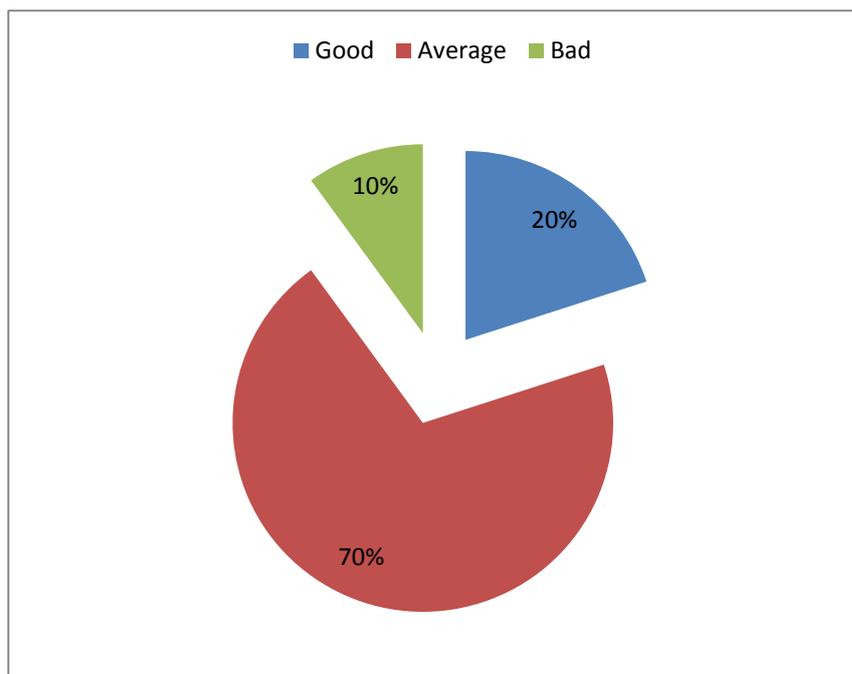
Graph9: Students' level of writing

70% of teachers find that students writing skills are average while only 20% of them assume that their students writing are good where as some teachers (10%) evaluate their students writing as bad. These results reveal that whether students writing skills are good, Average, or even bad teachers can not demonstrate the real level of their students.

Q10: What aspects do you focus more on when you correct?

Options	Numbers	%
Grammatical structure	2	20
Coherence and cohesion	2	20
Both	6	60
Total	10	100

Table 10: Aspects teachers focus on when correcting
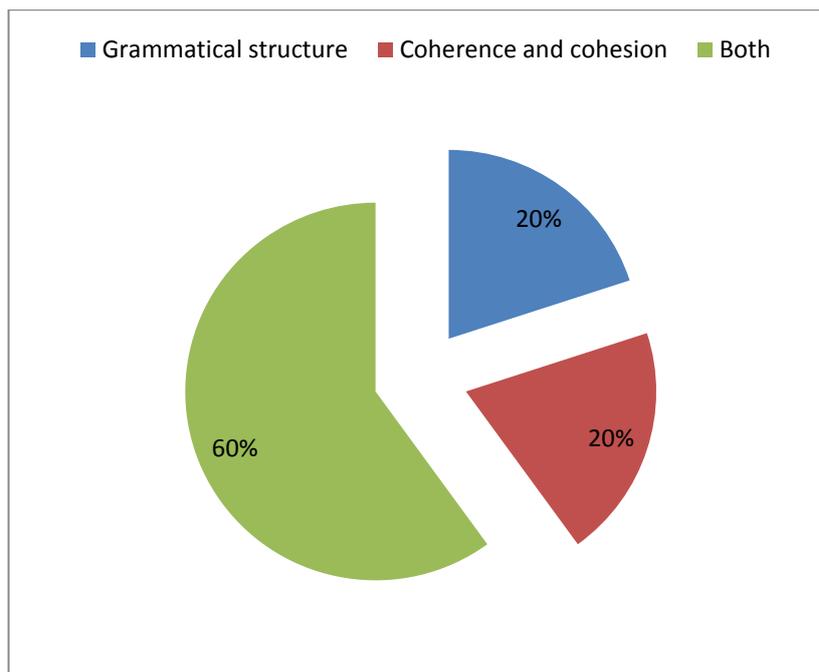
Graph10: Aspects teachers' focus on when correcting

Results show that majority of teachers (60%) focus on both important aspects when correcting which are: Grammatical structure besides to coherence and cohesion, however, some teachers (20%) focus only on grammatical structure where as others (20%) focus on coherence and cohesion. These results determine that the process of correcting depends on teachers and their lesson objectives.

Q11: In addition to the different aspects that needs focus; do you agree that handwriting is an important element which needs to be developed?

Options	Numbers	%
Agree	2	20
Strongly agree	8	80
Disagree	0	0
Strongly agree	0	0
Total	10	100

Table 11: Agree or disagree with handwriting as important element
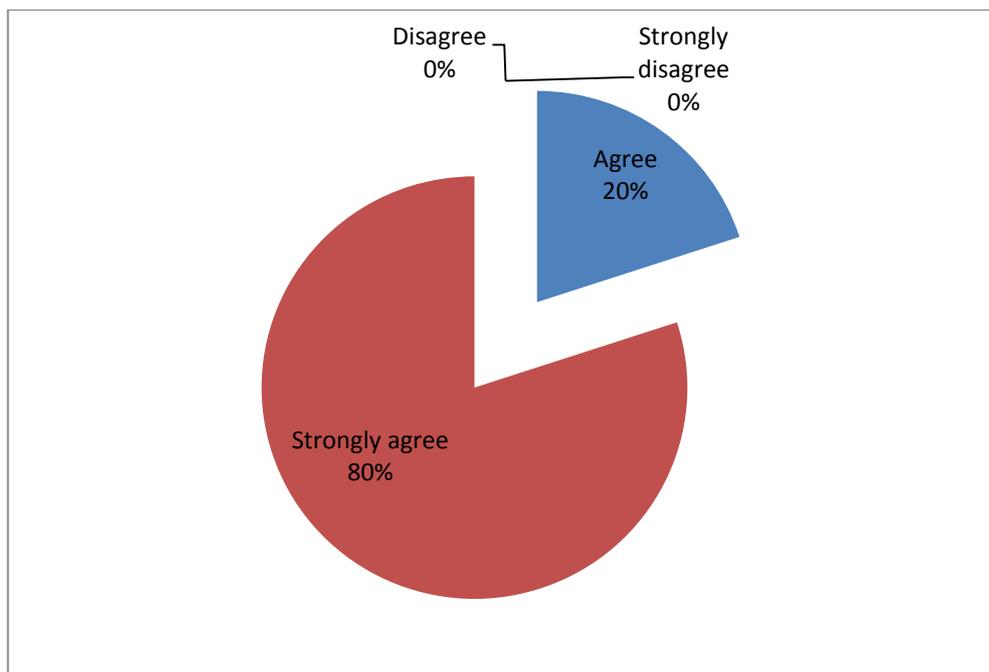
Graph11: Agree or disagree with handwriting as important element

The data gathered presents that whether teachers agree (20%) or strongly agree (80%); handwriting is an important element which needs to be developed, that is to say, the majority of teachers suffer from poor handwriting therefore, they strongly agree with the idea that handwriting should be developed because it takes time and effort when scoring students' exam paper.

Q12: As a teacher, do you take handwriting in consideration when you correct?

Options	Numbers	%
Yes	7	70
NO	3	30
Total	10	100

Table 12: Considering Handwriting when correcting
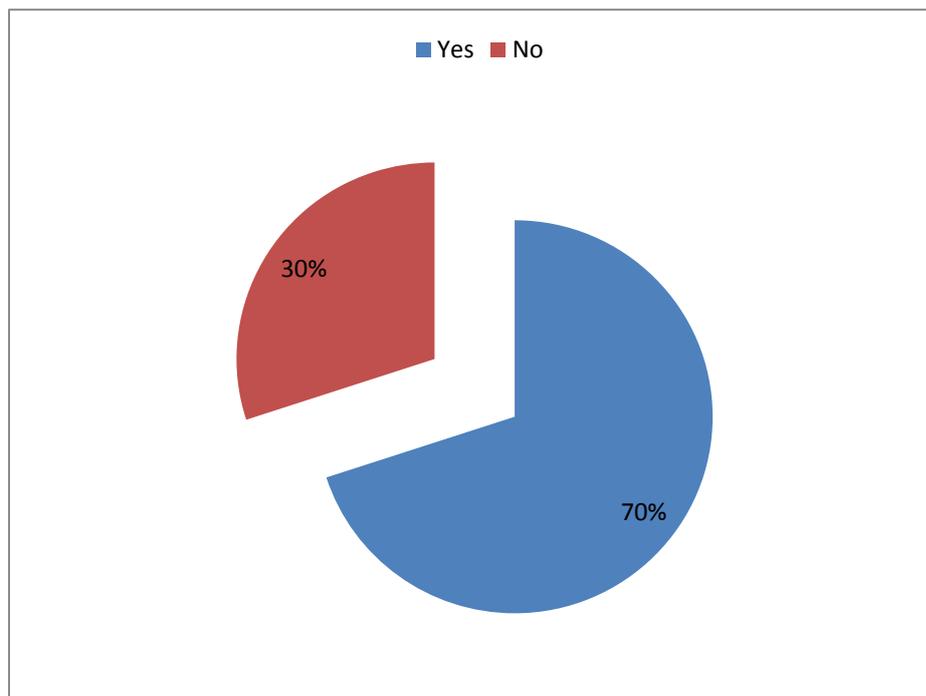
Graph12: Considering handwriting when correcting

70% of teachers take handwriting into consideration when correcting students' exam paper. According to teachers answers with good handwriting gives them good impression about the student ability and knowledge; furthermore, it is important in making students ideas clear to the teacher because it reflects the learner's accuracy. However, teachers see that when the answer is illegible they cannot mark it because it affects the understanding and demotivate the teacher to continue correcting. 30% of teachers do not take handwriting in consideration when correcting; they assume that when correcting they focus more on the knowledge and mastery of the language.

Q13: What do you think of legible handwriting?

Options	Numbers	%
Compulsory	5	50
Preferable	4	40
Optional	1	10
Total	10	100

Table13: Teachers' opinions about legible handwriting
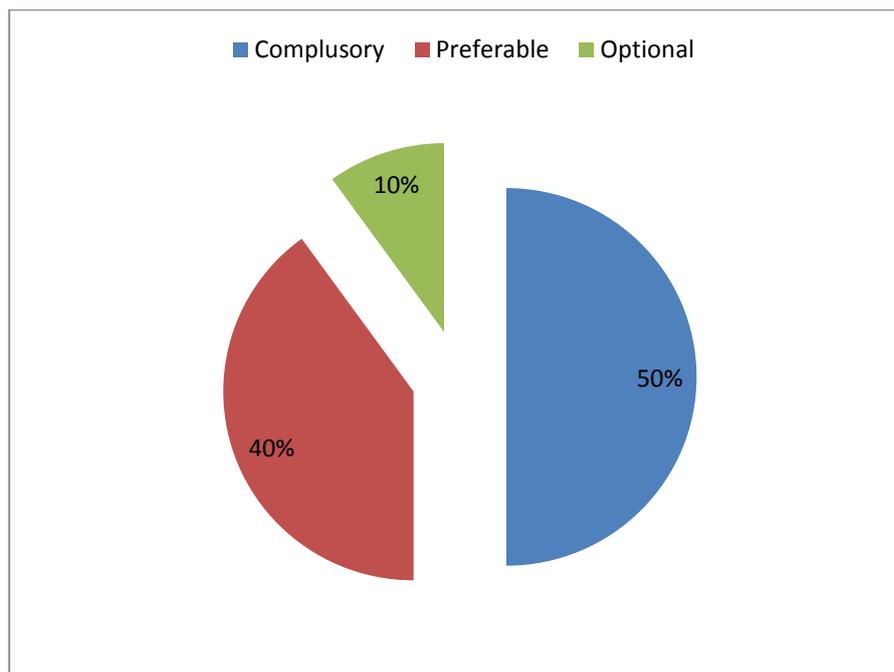
Graph13: Teachers' opinions about legible handwriting

The majority of teachers (50%) asserts that legible handwriting is compulsory since it represents an understandable, clear language for the teachers who will save time to pick answers and evaluate them besides writing legibly is very important element in the learning and teaching career. Moreover, teachers see that illegible handwriting cannot be read, so fair corrections will be impossible; in addition, legible handwriting reflects students' self confidence whereas (40%) of teachers claim that legible handwriting is preferable to ease the way for the reader to understand what is written, while (10%) of teachers see legible handwriting is optional unless it affects the understanding. These results show that handwriting is a must for students to develop in their educational process.

Q14: Does poor handwriting cause problem for you when correcting?

Options	Numbers	%
Yes	8	80
NO	2	20
Total	10	100

Table14: Handwriting as problem for teachers
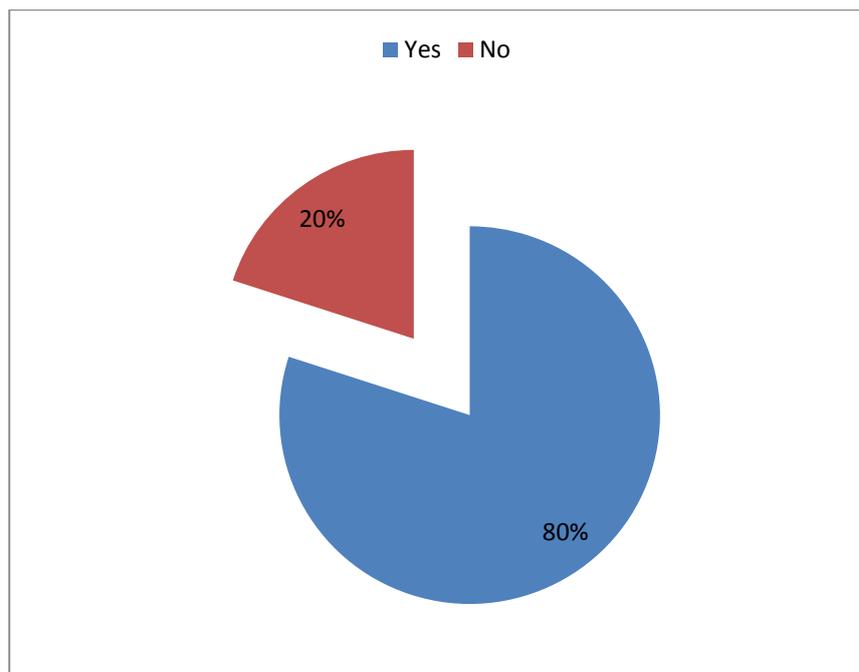
Graph14: Handwriting as problem for teachers

The information obtained show that most of teachers (80%) have problems with their students handwriting they see that poor legibility consume time and they cannot decipherer their students' writing; furthermore, it is difficult for teachers to pick up the answers (good ones) and sometimes they do not see them as a result teacher fell demotivated and the mark will decrease . However, (20%) of teachers assume that poor handwriting do not cause problem for them but it makes the students ideas ambiguous. These results explain that poor legibility means lower scores.

Q15: when giving final score, does handwriting matter for you?

Options	Numbers	%
Yes	7	70
NO	3	30
Total	10	100

Table15: Teachers' final score for poor handwriting
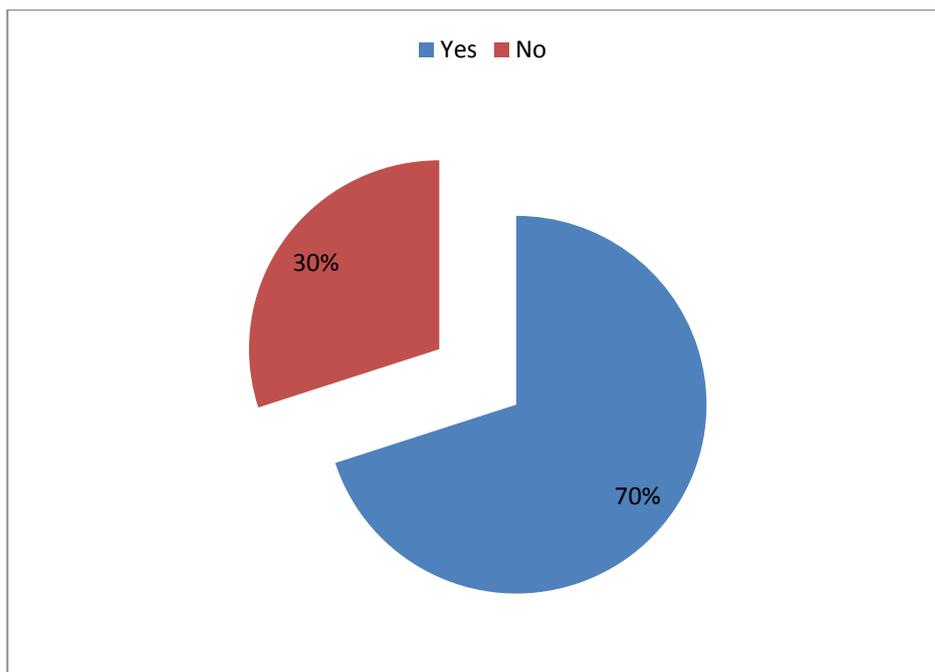
Graph15: Teachers' final score for poor handwriting

70% of teachers assert that when giving final score handwriting matters due to legible writing gives them feeling of conformability while correcting so, unconsciously they give a bonus mark to it. Moreover, clear and legible handwriting gives a very organized manner to the students' paper and the student himself. However, 30% of teachers claim that they focus on the answer but they put a remark about their students' handwriting. These results reveal that majority of teachers take learners' handwriting into consideration when giving the final score, that is to say, students' final score depends on their handwriting.

Q16: As a teacher, do you make comments about your students' handwriting?

| Options	Numbers	%
Yes	9	90
No	1	10
Total	10	100

Table16: Teachers comments to students' handwriting
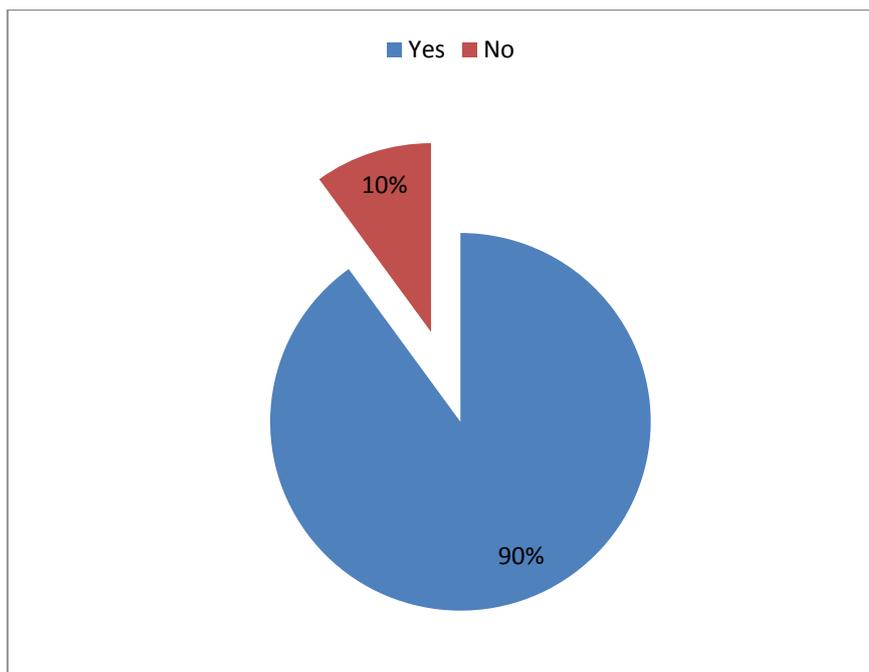
Graph16: Teachers comments to students' handwriting

The data gathered reveal that (90%) of teachers make comments about their students handwriting; they see that comments may aware students therefore they suggest some comments such as: improve your handwriting! I cannot understand what is written? Or sometimes by putting question mark (??) and exclamation mark (!!) however, (10%) of teachers do not make written comments but they make them only orally before and during the exam.

Q17: Do you think that legible handwriting is helpful to students because:

Options	Numbers	%
Making teachers at ease when correcting	2	20
It affects the final score	6	60
Both	2	20
Total	10	100

Table 17: Reasons behind the importance of handwriting for students
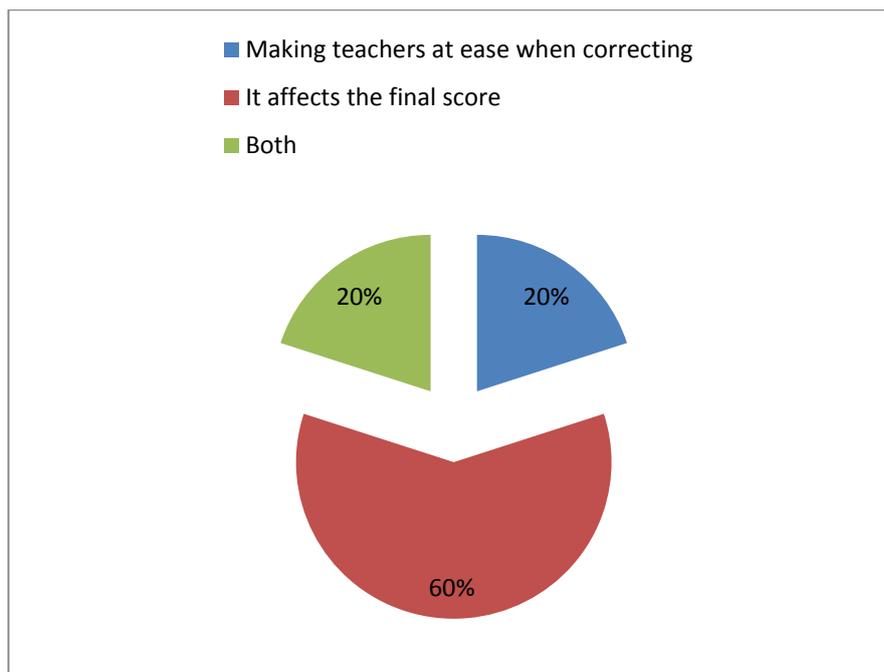
Graph 17: Reasons behind the importance of handwriting for students

The majority of teachers (60%) see that legible handwriting is helpful to students because it affects the final score due to poor legibility which make them unable to evaluate their learners' answers whereas (20%) of them see that it makes the teacher at ease when correcting, however, (20%) think that poor writing do not just makes teachers at ease but also affects the final score of the learner. These results determine that poor legibility plays a crucial role for students.

Q18: Do you encourage your students to improve their handwriting?

| Options	Numbers	%
Yes	9	90
No	1	10
Total	10	100

Table 18: Teachers encouraging students to improve their handwriting
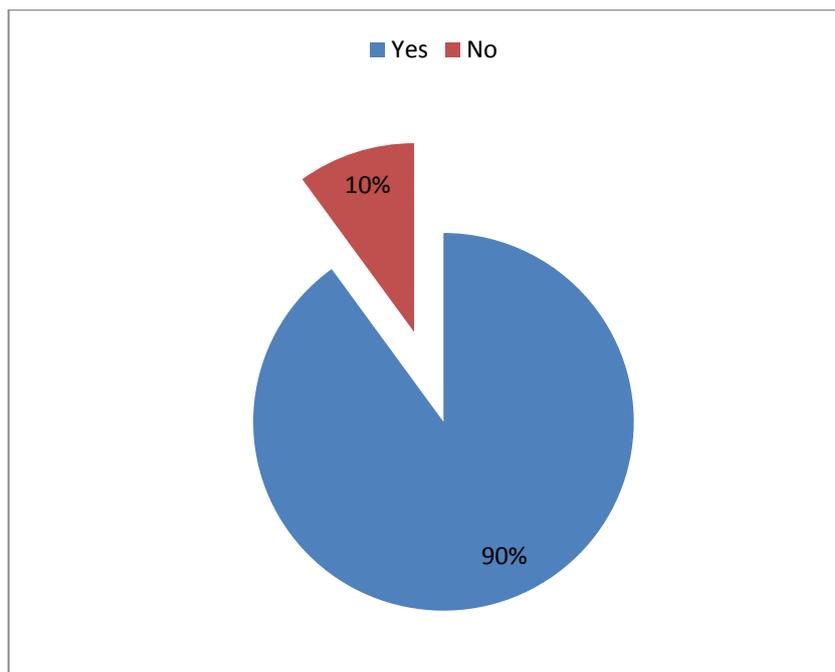
Graph 18: Teachers encouraging students to improve their handwriting

Results presents that (90%) of teachers encourage their students to improve their handwriting using different strategies; some teachers see that reminding learners before and during the exam that handwriting matters makes them work to improve it, furthermore, they ask learners to practice writing at home by imitating a good written model. Moreover, extensive reading helps them to acquire a wide range of vocabulary which facilitate for them to write every word clearly and correctly as a result of concentration on letter formation besides to other teachers who encourage learners by making them aware about the effects in the future career or in making official exam. 10% of teachers assume that they do not encourage their students because they think that handwriting is a personal issue. Despite the contradictions in teachers point view, handwriting is still important for both of students and instructors.

5. Discussions of the findings

The obtained information from teachers' questionnaire reveals that the importance of tests remains in identifying students' weaknesses and strengths besides it is a tool to improve students' skills and abilities. According to teachers' answers, tests do not reflect the real level of students due to factors such as: anxiety, lack of preparation, and stress moreover, tests do not cover all the points taught in the class and do not reveal all students capacities; good answers can be a result of cheating.

Concerning informing students about the test format; majority of teachers' answer were positive, that is to say, informing students avoid bad surprises and help them to achieve better and lower the exam stress; the preferable type of test commonly used by teachers is a combination between MCQ test and Essay test due to learners differences and styles; furthermore, both types of questions produces different issues and require different answers. Most of teachers think that MCQ test and Essay test do not measure the same content and ability referring to teachers' answers Essay test measures productive skills and students must show good command where as MCQ test retain knowledge of the content already received.

In other hand, the data gathered presents that teachers evaluates students writing during exams as average, in addition, the majority of teachers strongly agree that handwriting is an important element which needs to be developed because most of teachers take handwriting in consideration when correcting test papers according to teachers answers good handwriting gives a good impression about the student ability and knowledge; furthermore, it is important in making their ideas clear to the teacher besides answers with illegible writing cannot be marked because it effects the understanding and demotivate the teacher to continue correcting. Therefore, teachers think that legible handwriting is compulsory since it represents understandable, clear language for teachers who will save time to evaluate students' exam papers. Referring to teachers' answers poor handwriting cause problems for them due to time consuming during the correction process also it gives difficulty to pick up the good answers, so the mark will decrease.

The majority of teachers confirm that when giving the final score students' handwriting matter because legible writing not just gives a feeling of conformability while correcting but also gives a very organized manner to the students paper as a result teachers gives a bones score to it. According to teachers views legible handwriting is helpful to student since it makes them at ease when correcting and most importantly it affects the final score as a consequence, teachers make comments about their students handwriting; comments such as: Improve your handwriting, I cannot understand what is written where as some teachers put question mark (?) and exclamation mark (!) next to the illegible answers. In order to encourage students to improve their poor handwriting; teachers make students aware of the effects in the future career especially when making official exams where as other teachers make students practice writing at home besides to extensive reading which helps them to acquire a wide range of vocabulary that facilitate for learners

to write every word clearly and correctly in addition reminding students before and during the exam that handwriting matters.

Conclusion

This chapter presents the data collection process by mentioning the method used in this study and the tools as well, then the questionnaire is described in details gathered data which has been presented in tables and graphs to show the statistics of the asked questions. Finally each question is analyzed in order to collect answers to the addressed research questions; through this analysis the study reveals that teachers take handwriting into considerations when correcting students tests papers and as a result of poor legibility students' scores decrease.

Recommendations

This descriptive research tackled only teachers' perspective toward students' poor handwriting; therefore, it is recommended to:

- Examine more the importance of increasing teachers' awareness of the side effects of poor handwriting in and out the classroom.
- Examining the most effecting manner of assessing students' handwriting.
- More research is also needed to determine the mechanism leading to the effectiveness of handwriting.
- Study about how can supplemental instructions improves students' poor handwriting.
- Further study to determine strategies to assist students improves transcription skills (legibility and fluency).
- Further study to determine if poor handwriting proficiency impacts not only Educational level but also future career.
- Further research is needed to learn more about the relationship between handwriting and reading.
- Further research on the relationship between pencil grasp and poor handwriting.
- Further research on sensory and motor to the writer's self-efficacy.
- Further research on the impact of spelling mistakes and poor handwriting on academic success.
- Exploring the effectiveness of handwriting instruction in classroom.

General conclusion

The purpose behind this study is to answer the raised questions in the introduction. The questions are: Does poor handwriting affects students' scores? What is teachers' attitude towards students' poor handwriting? Investigating the problems teachers' face when correcting test papers with poor legibility? What kind of feedback teachers give, to their students? The answers of these questions determine that students' poor handwriting affect their testing scores.

The study has been presented in three chapters. The first chapter is divided into two sections; the primary section is devoted to the writing skill in which provides descriptions and explanation about the importance of writing skill in the educational system. It spot lights on writing definitions, it identifies the main basic rules of writing such as: Brevity, Clarity, and Simplicity. Then the importance of writing; additionally, writing with other skills and explained EFL writing problems such as: anxiety, motivation, self-esteem, and self-confidence. The secondary section deals with Handwriting; it identifies the term handwriting and then the constituent of handwriting, besides to the major factors which contribute mainly in illegible handwriting. It focuses also on the impact of poor handwriting on students' test scores; furthermore, it shed lights on the importance to teach handwriting and how supplemental instruction improves compositional and promotes success; in addition to the importance of handwriting. It narrows these points to raise teachers' awareness to handwriting.

The second chapter tackles illustration about testing generalities; it provides a clear identification to the most crucial concepts related to testing which are: evaluation, assessment, and testing. Then types of tests. Additionally to the main characteristics of a good test, Moreover to stages of designing a test; it provides illustration about two types of tests which are MCQ test and Essay test due to commonly used by university teachers.

The third chapter is the practical side of this research study; it involves description of teachers' questionnaire. It treats the gathered data presented in tables and graphs accompanied with its analysis and then, the discussion of the results. Findings show that poor handwriting affects EFL tests scores. Finally the research study suggests some recommendations for future research

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Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers:

We would greatly appreciate your time to complete this questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire is to know your opinion about students' poor handwriting in English at Mohammed Kheider University of Biskra. Additionally, we want to know if there is a relationship between poor handwriting or "poor legibility" and students' low scores.

Your opinions are very crucial to make this research valid.

Thank you very much in advance.   Mrs. Sid Nour el houda

Section one: Personal Information

1. Please specify your degree?

   - License

   - Master

   - Magister

   - Doctorate

2. How many years have you been teaching English at the university?

   …………………………………………years

Section Two: Testing

3- As a teacher, do you think that tests are important in a way that:

   a- They identify students weakness and strengths

   b- They are a tool to improve your students skills and abilities

   c- Both

4- Do tests reflect the real level of your students?

A-Yes

B- No

☐

Please Explain,

,……
……
…….

5- Is it important to tell your students about the test format before exams?

A-Yes

☐

B-No

☐

Why?
……
……

6- Which type of tests you prefer to use?

A-Multiple choice questions

☐

B-Essay tests

☐

C-Combination of both

☐

Why?
……
…….

7-Do you think that Essay tests and MCQ tests measure the same content and ability?

A-Yes

☐

B-No

☐

Please Explain

,………

……

……………………………………………………………………………….

8-In your opinion, which type of tests you find difficult to correct?

A-Essay tests

B-MCQ tests

C-Both of them

D-None of them

Section three: Writing skill and handwriting:

9- What do you think of your students writing skill?

A-Excellent

B-Very good

C-Good

D-Bad

E-Very bad

10- What aspects do you focus more on when you correct?

A-Correct grammatical structure

B-Coherence and cohesion

C-Both

11-Inaddition to the different aspects that needs focus; do you agree that handwriting is an important element which needs to be developed?

A-Agree

B- Strongly agree ☐

C-Disagree ☐

D-Strongly disagree ☐

12- As a teacher, do you take handwriting in consideration when you correct?

A-Yes ☐

B-No ☐

Please Explain why?

....

....

....

13- What do you think of legible handwriting?

A-Compulsory ☐

B-Preferable ☐

C-Optional ☐

Please Explain why?

....

....

....

14-Does poor handwriting cause problem for you when correcting?

A-Yes ☐

B-No ☐

Please Explain why?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………

15-When giving final score, does the students' handwriting matter for you?

A-Yes

B-No

Please Explain why?

....

....

....

16-As a teacher; do you make comments about your students' handwriting?

A-Yeas

B-No

If yes; what comments have you made?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………

17-Do you think that legible handwriting is helpful to students because?

A-It makes teacher at ease when correcting

B-It affects the final score

C-Both

18-Do you encourage your students to improve their handwriting?

A-Yes

B-No

Please Explain how?

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………

 Suggestions and comments

You are kindly requested to add any additions, suggestions, or comments. Please write them in the space provided below.

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you again

الملخص

يواجه طلبة اللغة الانجليزية تحديات كبيرة حين يتعلق الأمر بتعلم الكتابة بهذه اللغة الأجنبية, لان الكتابة تعتبر تحدي كبير بحد ذاتها لطلبة اللغة الانجليزية لما تتطلبه هذه الأخيرة من تحكم جيد بقواعد اللغة على سبيل المثال. القواعد, علامات الوقف, الأفكار و المنهجية وإضافة إلى هذه التحديات التي لا يستطيعون الإلمام بها هناك مشكل جديد يواجههم ألا وهو رداءة خط اليد الذي يعجز القارئ أو المصحح عن فهم المعنى المطلوب الذي ينتج عنه تدني مستوى الطالب. هذا الكم الهائل من المتطلبات جعل طالب اللغة الانجليزية يعزف عن الكتابة أو بالأحرى يتجنب الكتابة. ومن هذا المنطلق جاءت هذه الدراسة والتي تنظر لفرضية إذا ما اخذ أستاذ اللغة الانجليزية رداءة خط اليد للطالب عند تصحيح أوراق الامتحان فان هذه الأخيرة يؤدي إلى تدني العلامة النهائية للطالب. هدف هذا البحث يتمثل في معرفة الصعوبات التي يواجهها الأساتذة عند تصحيح أوراق الامتحان التي تحتوي على خط رديء ومن اجل إثبات هذه الفرضية وبغرض إعطاء هذا البحث مصداقية قمنا بجمع المعلومات الخاصة بالأساتذة عن طريق توزيع استبيان يحتوي على أسئلة متعلقة بمشكلة رداءة الخط. يجدر الذكر أن الأساتذة الانجليزية الذين وزع عليهم الاستبيان من جامعة محمد خيضر بسكرة. في نهاية هذا الاستبيان و بعد تحليلنا للأجوبة المقدمة أظهرت النتائج أن أساتذة اللغة الانجليزية بجامعة محمد خيضر بسكرة يهتمون بنوعية خط طلبتهم, كما أن هذا الأخير يؤثر حتما على العلامة النهائية للطالب.