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## **The Effect of Peer Reviewing on Writing Apprehension and Essay Writing Ability of Prospective EFL Teachers**

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*Abstract: This study aimed to ascertain the current level of writing apprehension experienced by Saudi prospective EFL teachers and their current level of essay writing ability. It also aimed to assess the impact of peer reviewing on their writing apprehension level and essay writing ability. Data collection was carried out via two instruments: Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) (Cheng, 2004) and an essay writing test. Reliability and validity of the two instruments were verified. The study sample consisted of 40 EFL major prospective teachers at Taibah University, KSA. These were equally divided into two groups: control (n=20) and experimental (n=20). Both groups were similar in terms of academic level, mother tongue background, and target language proficiency. The experimental group participants were introduced to peer-reviewing essay writing sessions while the control group participants were taught through the traditional teacher feedback-based essay writing. Results of data analysis showed positive impacts of peer reviewing on experimental group participants' writing apprehension and essay writing ability. Implications for using peer reviewing in ESL writing were discussed.*

### **Introduction**

Writing has become central in today's schools and universities as a measure for academic success. Students work hard to learn how to make more informed decisions about their writing and gain more control over improvement of English writing skill. Writing teachers also work hard helping students write fuller, more descriptive and specific papers. Saudi university and college students regard writing as the most difficult component of their English language acquisition skills. This perception is supported by the researcher's English teaching experience in higher education in Saudi Arabia. A consensus seems to prevail among language instructors that students view writing not only as a particularly challenging discipline but as the singly most difficult aspect of English language acquisition. Most of the research conducted within the EFL Saudi Arabian context addressed writing as a product rather than a process. Consequently, almost no reference has been made to the role of the learner's affective aspects in the EFL writing process itself.

Worldwide, much has been written regarding the role of affective learner-related variables, such as writing apprehension (Huang, 2009; Lee, 2005; Rubin, Katznelson & Perpignan; 2005; Ozturk & Cecen, 2007; etc.) and its effect on the writing process. Writing anxiety is a "fear of the writing process that outweighs the projected gain from the ability to

write” (Thompson, 1980:121) and which clearly negatively affects writing performance (Pajares & Johnson, 1994; Atay & Kurt, 2006; etc.).

Research has shown a consistent relationship between writing apprehension and a variety of measures of competence in English. High apprehensives score lower on standardized tests of writing and write essays that receive lower evaluations (Wen-Shuenn (2006). Writing apprehension has proven to have a negative influence on EFL/ESL learners' writing performance and quality (Cheng, Horwitz & Shallert, 1999; Hassan, 2001; Masny & Foxall, 1992 Atay & Kurt, 2006; etc.). Tsui (1996) believes that learning to write in the foreign language involves as much anxiety as learning the other skills, because writing is predominantly product-oriented, and it requires individual work, i.e., students feel they are deprived of help, support and encouragement. As a result, learners suffer from a “*distress associated with writing*” and develop “*a profound distaste for the process*” (Madigan, Linton & Johnson, 1996: 295). When teacher feedback includes inconsistent marking of errors or vague responses on content, it may even influence students' writing ability negatively making them confused, passive or frustrated (Williams, 2003). A recent study (Jahin, 2007) highlighted the need for teachers to create a sense of community within the EFL classroom, especially in EFL writing classrooms, as well as the need to provide students with ample opportunity to cooperate in groups or pairs so that they can overcome their apprehension blocks.

In this respect, a technique that has received great attention over the last two decades is peer reviewing (Fox, 1980; Holt, 1992; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Mittan, 1989; Soares, 2004; Tsui & Ng, 2000; McMurry, 2004; Mukundan & Nimehchisalem, 2011; etc). Much research has indicated the positive effect of peer reviewing on the writing process and on the writer's product. For example, Lundstrom and Baker's study (2009) indicated that reviewers at both lower and higher levels of proficiency made some significant gains in their own.

Besides, slight gains were observed on both global and local aspects of writing. Mittan (1989) noticed peer review's impact on students' confidence in their writing. Mangelsdorf's (1992) study of peer review in ESL composition classroom explored that most of the students viewed the process as beneficial, specifically to content and organization. The results of Kurt and Atay's (2007) study of the effects of peer feedback on prospective Turkish EFL teachers' writing anxiety indicated that the majority of the prospective teachers felt relieved when they shared their anxiety with friends. Wen-Shuenn's (2006) assessment of adult EFL learners' reactions to peer review and teacher feedback in university EFL composition class indicated that peer review served a pragmatic function.

To the best knowledge of the researcher no study has been carried out to assess prospective teachers' writing apprehension level in the Saudi EFL setting and its relationship to their essay writing ability. Likewise, no study has ever thought about using some techniques to help lower EFL student teachers' feeling of writing apprehension in writing classrooms or assess their impacts on EFL student teachers' essay writing ability. Hence, this study aims to explore the use of peer reviewing and asses its impact on prospective EFL teachers' writing apprehension and essay writing ability.

Choice to use peer reviewing was based on a strong conviction by the researcher. This conviction was founded in both theory and practice. Theoretically, peer review in process-oriented instruction can find its theoretical support in two different, but closely related disciplines: learning and rhetorical theories. In terms of learning, Vygotsky's (1978) theory on learning and language coincides with the use of peer reviews. Vygotsky deemed social interaction an essential element for cognitive learning and accorded great importance to language in human's thought development. To him, learning is a cognitive activity that takes place in social interaction. By the same token, writing is a learning activity in which the writer learns best through interacting with his peer reviewers. With regard to rhetorical

theories, those stressing the social nature of writing have also favored the use of peer reviews (Nassaji & Swain, 2000; Rollinson, 2005; Teo, 2006; Berlin, 1987; Bruffee, 1984; Harris, 1990; Lee & Schallert, 2008; etc.). For example, Bruffee (1984) contended that writing is derived from the “conversation” among writers in their discourse community. He argued that the collaborative environment in peer groups is conducive to addressing high-order composition issues among writers, such as focus and idea development (*cited in Stanley, 1992*). Therefore, it is important to offer students opportunities to immerse themselves in constructive conversation about writing.

In terms of practice, empirical research findings emphasized the positive impacts of peer reviewing, such as enhancing positive attitudes towards writing within ESL/EFL learners; giving students a sense of audience; increasing their motivation and confidence in their writing; helping them learn to evaluate their own writing better (Mittan, 1989); and fostering collaboration and creating positive environment for learning (see Mangelsdorf, 1992 and Caulk, 1994; Zhang, 1995; Lee, 1997; Tang and Tithecott, 1999; Topping, Smith, Swanson and Elliot, 2000; Hyland, 2003; etc.). By learning to evaluate one another’s writing, students can also learn new ideas and vocabulary and internalize criteria of good writing so that they can apply them to future writing situations. Besides, when students know they have more readers for their compositions, they are more motivated to invest efforts in writing. Another reason was the finding of research studies (e.g. Jahin, 2007; Jahin and Idrees, 2010) that indicated that writing is the most challenging skills for Saudi prospective EFL teachers.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Saudi EFL teacher education context, written assignments are normally a requirement in student teachers' academic pursuit. However, Saudi university and college students regard writing as the most difficult component of their English language acquisition skills (e.g. Jahin, 2007 and Jahin & Idrees, 2010). For example, Jahin and Idrees's (2010) study of EFL major student teachers' writing proficiency and attitudes towards learning English found out a consensus prevailing among language instructors of these students that students view writing not only as a particularly challenging discipline but as the singly most difficult aspect of English language acquisition.

In Saudi Arabia writing is an integral component of EFL instruction. However, at all colleges, the viewpoint of writing has been that writing is producing, involving transmission of the writer's message and making it clear for others. Accordingly, the teaching of writing has emphasized the written product. Writing itself has almost always been served as an evaluative purpose, causing high writing apprehension for most student writers. This has been heightened by the fact that feedback on students' writing is basically evaluative in nature and teacher-based. As a result, there have been some problems in writing both in quality and quantity as well as writing attitudes of most students: they lack especially their own ideas in writing and apprehend a lot for writing act. Instructors teach writing composition in the light of a pre-determined set of rules to be followed when writing paragraphs or essays. Likewise, EFL writing instructors' evaluations of students' written compositions are conducted in the light of the models of correct paragraphs or essays provided by them to their students to copy. Besides, the emphasis of evaluation throughout is on whether students use correct forms and avoid errors of mechanics (e.g. spelling, punctuation and capitalization) or grammar, rather than on content, organization and cohesion. This heightened students' feeling of apprehension when involved in writing tasks or when asked to submit assignments in written form. This can be best understood if we know that exams of all subjects require students to write lengthy essays or passages, something that adds to the huge responsibility of the EFL writing

instructors who, in turn, exercise more pressure on students to produce correct writing compositions.

All these factors make of writing a highly challenging and demanding skill and create within students negative affective attitudes towards writing. Within the product-based paradigm, instructors prefer to go for the free composition method in which '*students are presented with a topic and are then free to write as they please*' (Pincas, 1982:110). However, this requires a reasonable level of writing competency and may only be suitable for advanced level students (Paulston, 1973). The aim is to "achieve proficiency in writing through unrestricted practice' (Cave, 1972:62). What makes matters worse is that most teachers' evaluations of students are impressionistic in nature. Critics of free composition argue that it ignores the importance of explicit support in developing writing competence and "*the teacher is engaged in a form of testing rather than teaching*" (Harris, 1975:305).

Within this atmosphere of mutual pressure, students work individually in carrying out their writing assignments with the absence of cooperative work. This makes of writing a solitary business in which students feel alienated and with no support. This feeling is reinforced by students' attitudes to teachers' feedback on their written products (Yang, 2011). They are always afraid of negative teacher criticism, something that makes them ashamed and timid.

Based on the results of the studies discussed so far, it may be assumed that writing apprehension would affect prospective teachers' attitudes towards and practices of writing in a similar way. Thus, by learning about their writing apprehension level and the variety of techniques that can be used to alleviate it would help teacher educators to adopt more appropriate teaching techniques and develop within learners more positive attitudes towards writing and contribute to the development of their writing performance. To the best knowledge of the researcher, there has been no research that addressed the impact of writing apprehension on Saudi prospective EFL teachers' writing apprehension or tried out intervention techniques to alleviate or overcome students' negative attitudes about writing. Due to the sound basis in research related to the benefits of peer reviewing for writing apprehension and writing proficiency, the purpose of this study is to assess the effect of using peer reviewing on prospective EFL teachers' writing apprehension and essay writing ability.

## Research Questions

This study seeks to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the current level of writing apprehension experienced by Saudi prospective EFL teachers?
2. What is the current level of Saudi prospective EFL teachers' essay writing ability?
3. What is the effect of peer reviewing on Saudi prospective EFL teachers' writing apprehension?
4. What is the effect of using peer reviewing on Saudi prospective EFL teachers' essay writing ability?

## Research Hypotheses

This study posed the following set of hypotheses:

- 1- Prospective EFL teachers experience a high level of writing apprehension.
- 2- The essay writing ability of prospective EFL teachers is low.
- 3- The use of peer reviewing does not have a statistically significant effect on prospective EFL teachers' feeling of writing apprehension.
- 4- The use of peer reviewing does not have a statistically significant effect on prospective EFL teachers' essay writing ability.

## Aims of the Study

The aim of the study was mainly to investigate the effect of using peer reviewing on Saudi prospective EFL teachers' essay writing ability and writing apprehension. Subsidiary goals of the study include:

1. To ascertain the current level of writing apprehension experienced by prospective EFL teachers.
2. To ascertain the current level of essay writing ability of prospective EFL teachers.
3. To assess the effect of using peer reviewing on prospective EFL teachers' feeling of writing apprehension.
4. To assess the effect of using peer reviewing on prospective EFL teachers' essay writing ability.

## Significance of the Study

It was hoped that fulfillment of the above aims would help to provide EFL teacher educators with invaluable information concerning writing apprehension as an essential factor that affects their students' writing ability. Besides, the findings of the study would orientate EFL teacher educators about students current essay writing ability and the relationship between their essay writing ability and their feeling of writing apprehension.

A significant contribution of the study would be orientating EFL teacher educators to the significance of making use of the peer reviewing in their teaching of writing. This, in itself, would enhance their efforts to use further innovative approaches in their teaching, especially with these students who are at a crucial time in their English education. At this stage they are increasingly expected to write in acceptable academic English and many will soon be expected to write well in the public domain. In this context, an investigation of the factors of success at this level is important if we are to provide students with the best preparation for these daunting tasks.

## The Role of Writing in English in Saudi Arabia

Writing in English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is highly limited in public primary, intermediate and secondary schools. Students are generally asked to write guided and/or controlled paragraphs. The focus in writing classes is on the form of the written product rather than on the process of writing. Paragraphs are written in one draft and grammatical and punctuation errors are corrected by the teacher. Yet, upon reaching the tertiary level, they face the challenge of writing freely in English as they are expected to 'write well-organized

paragraphs and essays' to pursue their academic study. Thus, students suffering a poor writing level of English risk repeating courses since all tests are written.

## Literature Review

Studies of peer review in ESL and has been associated with its positive impacts on students' writing ability in general and on students' feelings of writing apprehension. On the first hand, the use of peer reviews in ESL writing classrooms has been generally supported in the literature as having potentially valuable social, cognitive, affective, and methodological benefits (Rollinson, 2005). Mittan (1989) argues that peer review gives students a sense of audience; increases their motivation and confidence in their writing; and helps them learn to evaluate their own writing better. Other benefits of peer review were proved by research (e.g. Mangelsdorf, 1992; Caulk, 1994; Zhang, 1995; Lee, 1997; Tang & Tithecott, 1999; Topping, Smith, Swanson & Elliot, 2000; Hyland, 2003; etc.).

Advocates of peer review have had both theory and research to support their beliefs. For Hansen and Liu (2005), "*Peer review is supported by several theoretical frameworks, including process writing, collaborative learning theory, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, and interaction and second language acquisition (SLA)*" (p. 31). In accordance with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the cognitive development of individuals results from the social interaction which extends their current competence through the guidance of more experienced individuals (Hansen & Liu, 2005).

Related research has cited peer reviewing in writing as having the following merits: a) bringing a genuine sense of audience into the writing classroom (Keh, 1990 & Mittan, 1989); b) facilitating the development of students' critical reading and analysis skills (e.g. Chaudron, 1984 & Keh, 1990); and c) encouraging students to focus on their intended meaning by discussing alternative points of view that can lead to the development of those ideas (DiPardo & Freedman, 1988, Mangelsdorf, 1992 & Mendonca & Johnson, 1994). It improves students' academic writing competence (e.g. Hu, 2005 and Hu & Tsui, 2010).

Research by Berg (1999) and Paulus (1999) suggests that feedback generated by peer review can prompt L2 writers to make revisions that lead to better quality writing. Tsui and Ng's (2000) study with secondary school students in Hong Kong identified four distinct benefits of peer review. *First*, writing for peers enhances learners' sense of audience, encouraging them to pay more attention to issues of clarity in their written work. *Second*, peer review makes students more aware of general problems in their own writing. *Third*, peer review encourages students' sense of ownership of their writing, helping to promote learner autonomy. *Fourth*, it is easier for students to decide whether to accept or reject the reviewer's suggestions. Besides, a study by Hu and Tsui (2010) discovered some cultural appropriateness and pedagogical efficacy benefits of peer reviews for Chinese postgraduate students. Min's (2006) study showed that peer review feedback affected EFL students' revision types and quality of texts. Saito's (2008) study revealed that the peer review group participants were superior in both quantity and quality of comments than the control group participants.

On the other hand, studies (e.g. Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 2000; Lee & Krashen, 2002, Atay and Kurt, 2006; Rankin-Brown's 2006; Temesgen, 2009; etc.) indicated that the higher the students' writing apprehension, the lower language their writing proficiency is. For example, Hassan's (2001) study revealed that high levels of writing apprehension negatively influenced the quality of students' writing composition. Atay and Kurt's study (2006) of Turkish prospective teachers' writing apprehension showed that more than half the participants had high or average writing apprehension. Abdel Latif's

(2007) study showed that students with low English linguistic knowledge had more writing apprehension than those with high linguistic knowledge. Magno (2008) found out that writing apprehension was one of the factors that predicted writing proficiency in English. Temesgen's (2009) study showed that students who received training on peer review experienced significantly less writing apprehension than those who did not.

As can be seen from the review above, most of the research conducted on university students was basically correlational and exploratory in notion. It focused on exploring the extent to which there is correlational relationship between writing performance and writing apprehension. However, it is worth noting that none of these studies has attempted to explore the possible impact that peer reviewing might have on prospective EFL teachers' essay writing ability.

Because writing anxiety research has been mostly restricted to school context, studies on the effects of writing apprehension on decisions and perceptions about writing have been mainly concerned with student populations. In contrast to the abundance of studies on L1 writing apprehension, research on L2 writing apprehension has been quite scant within the Arab region. To the researcher's best knowledge, there has been no study on prospective EFL teachers' writing apprehension in the Saudi context or on the impact of their writing apprehension on their essay writing ability.

## **Definition of Terms**

### **Peer Reviewing**

Peer reviewing is referred to as 'peer feedback', which is an assessment form performed by equal status learners (Gielen et al. 2010). In 'peer review' a student does more than simply editing and evaluating another student's essay. Students respond to *what* the essay says as well as *how* it says it (Mangelsdorf, 1992). Peer reviewing is a powerful learning tool (e.g. Mangelsdorf, 1992; Diab, 2011; etc.) which provides students with an authentic audience; increases their motivation to write; enables them to receive different views on their writing and read their own writing critically; and assists them in gaining confidence in their writing (Mittan, 1989). For the purpose of this study, peer reviewing is meant to refer to the process where L2 writing students collaborate to assess one another's written composition, which, in this study, refers to essay writing as a replacement of teacher-based feedback in L2 writing sessions.

### **Writing Apprehension**

Writing apprehension is understood to mean negative, anxious feelings (about oneself as a writer, one's writing situation, or one's writing task) that disrupt some part of the writing process. The term is used to describe writers who are intellectually capable of the task at hand, but who nevertheless have difficulty with it (McLeod, 1987). In this study, writing apprehension is operationally understood as performance on the Second Language Writing Apprehension Inventory (SLWAI) (Cheng, 2004). The statements in the SLWAI probe several anxiety-related factors. Namely, writing apprehension is meant to refer to participants' general tendencies to avoid and associate negative feelings with writing, such as nervousness, fear of negative evaluation, etc.



### **Essay Writing Ability**

In this study, 'essay writing ability' refers to the participant's ability to write essays of different lengths exhibiting attention to a set of criteria. These are '*Mechanics*', '*Content*', '*Style*', '*Logic*', '*Grammar*', '*Vocabulary*', '*Diction*' and '*Rhetorical aspects*', including organization, cohesion, unity, topic, occasion and appropriateness to audience.

### **The Method**

To investigate the effect of peer reviewing on participants' essay writing ability and their writing apprehension, a quasi-experimental research approach was adopted. The two group pre-post design was used. The samples of the study were assigned to the following conditions: pretests, intervention (i.e., using peer reviewing) and posttests. The intervention took place in ecologically appropriate classrooms in terms of seating arrangement, conditioning, lighting, space and resources availability, etc. The overall scores of both control and experimental groups' participants in the SLWAI and the Essay Writing Test were compared.

### **Instrumentation**

Data were collected via two types of instruments. The first is Second Language Writing Apprehension Inventory (SLWAI) (Cheng, 2004). The second is the Essay Writing Test (EWT) designed purposefully for the study. An outline of each instrument is given below.

#### *Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) (Cheng, 2004).*

The Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) (Cheng, 2004) (see Appendix 1) measures the degree to which an individual feels anxious when writing in an L2 and consists of 22-items all of which are answered on a five-point Likert Scale, ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The SLWAI has good internal consistency, with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient reported of .91 (Cheng, 2004).

#### *The Essay Writing Test (EWT)*

The Essay Writing Test (EWT) consists of three topics: "My personal Ambition"; "My Favorite Childhood Memory"; and "Position of Woman in the Saudi Society". The rhetorical form of the writing tasks on those topics was expository for the first, narrative for the second, and argumentative for the third essay. The choice of the topics was done by the researcher and agreed upon by the participants. Participants were asked to write the three essays in three different occasions.

To achieve consistency, a checklist of assessment rubrics was used by student reviewers in reviewing their peers' essays. Both the essay writing activities and the checklist of rubrics were used during class time, since most theorists (e.g. Cooper, 1977; Diederich, 1974; etc.) believe that a direct sample is the best way to measure writing ability. The checklist of rubrics was adapted from the Educational Testing Service and approved by a set of nine jury members (See Appendix 4). The participants were given proper instructions and time limit. The experimental group participants were trained on how to use the checklist of rubrics. After written essays were collected, students were instructed to exchange their essays to do peer reviewing using the checklist of rubrics.

### **Reliability and Validity of the Instruments**

Despite the evident internal consistency of the SLWAI, its reliability was assessed via the test-retest method. It was administered twice to a sample of students similar to the participants of the main study. An interval of five weeks separated the two administrations. An Alpha Cronbach's correlation coefficient of .89 was calculated. Besides, an internal consistency reliability check was computed and it was found that the alpha coefficient for the SLWAI was .91.89, which is close to the correlation coefficient reported by Cheng (2004).

To assess the validity of both the Essay Writing Test and the checklist of rubrics, these were handed to a number of ESL writing instructors whose feedback helped to refine, rewrite and even delete some of the items in these instruments. The minimum and maximum essay length was specified (10-15 lines) and the number of supporting details was specified as well.

The validity coefficient was .86 for the experimental group and .88 for the control group. Concurrent validity was also determined by comparing participants' scores on the posttest and their scores on the last essay quiz they took 5 weeks prior to the administration of the posttest. To assess inter-rater reliability, 25% random sample of the pretest and posttest essays was selected and double-scored. A colleague teaching ESL writing to a similar cohort of students was asked to grade the pretest and posttest essay samples holistically by using the procedures and criteria agreed upon with the researcher. The overall marks yielded an inter-rater correlation coefficient of .92 for each group. Meetings between the two raters helped to reach full agreement on the final ratings.

### **The Participants**

The participants of the study were 40 male student teachers enrolled at the English Language Department, Teachers' College, Taibah University, Saudi Arabia. These constituted two equal sections of 20 students each. Participants in both groups were almost homogenous in terms of age, academic level, and cultural background. They take language courses, such as 'Writing I', 'Writing II' and 'Writing III', in the first three semesters respectively followed by an Advanced Writing course in the fourth semester. In Advanced Writing students are required to write essays on different topics in different text types, such as summaries, response papers, and expressive, expository, argumentative and narrative texts. Other courses require students to carry out written project work and sit for written exams in English.

### **Training the Participants on Peer Reviewing**

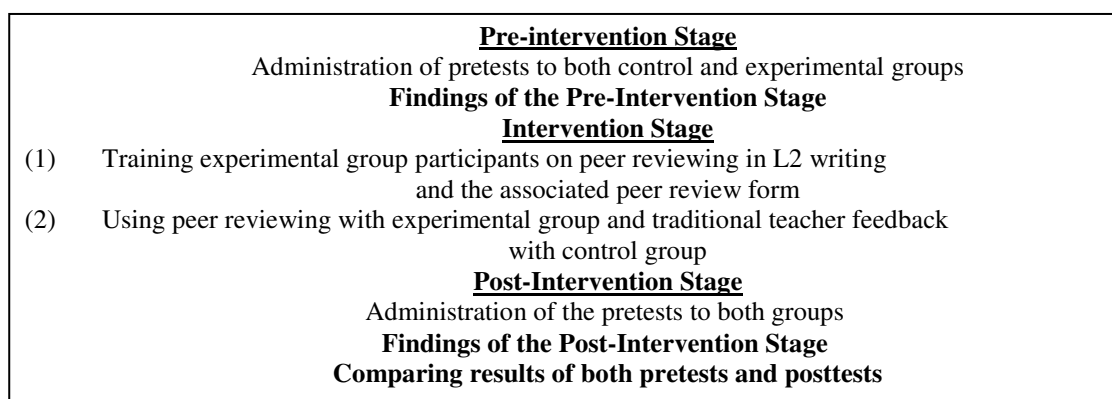
Participants were trained over two class periods. The aim was to acquaint them with the concept of peer reviewing. Issues addressed included the 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when', and 'why' of peer review. Training consisted of a presentation the elements of which were mostly adapted from the OWL resource (*See Appendix 2 for an outline of power point presentation on peer review*).

More specific hands-on training first involved students in small group analysis of an essay from the course text so as to make them aware of the rhetorical requirements for their own essays. Subsequent training was adapted from the studies of Mangelsdorf (1992), Stanley (1992), and Neubert and McNelis (1990). In small groups, students were given training worksheets with examples of actual peer reviewing comments to analyze and discuss. Comments were either text-based or surface-level, specific or nonspecific. After that,

small groups read a student's model essay and discussed strengths and weaknesses, using a structured '*Peer Review Form*' (See Appendix 3). This was followed by class discussion of the essay and peer comments. Then, in dyads students wrote their own comments about the essay on the *Peer Review Form*, which was followed by role play in dyads: one student reading comments, and the other listening and writing his reactions to the comments. Finally, there was class discussion about the most effective types of comments. When students completed their work with partners, the researcher commented on the work they have done and participants were told that the suggestions discussed, and the written responses they have from peers may offer more choices to use to improve their essays. In the end, participant writers decided the content of their essays and made choices. They worked primarily with one partner, although they were encouraged to ask for additional readers. From a sociolinguistic perspective, students adjusted to one another's communication pattern. In addition, 'group work' required attention and good listening abilities. The *Peer Review Form* helped them to focus on limited areas to respond to and avoid giving too much attention to pragmatic function of peer reviewing (e.g. giving hearty support and compliments) at the cost of linguistic function.

### Procedure

In the second term of academic year 2009/2010, the SLWAI and the EWT were piloted with a group of participants similar to those of the main study. Based on the results, some changes were made in the EWT. The experiment was conducted at the Teachers' College, Taibah University during the first semester of the academic year 2010-2011 and lasted for 14 weeks (4 hrs a week = 56 hrs). Detailed instructions were provided. Besides, participants were provided with a checklist of rubrics in the light of which their performance in the EWT would be assessed. To avoid any extraneous impact on students' performance in the EWT, students sat for the SLWAI two weeks before the EWT. The SLWAI was translated into Arabic by the researcher, and translation was cross-checked by two other independent translators. Then, the researcher administered it personally to the study participants. Before introducing peer reviewing to the experimental group, both experimental and control groups sat for the EWT. After experimentation, both groups were post-tested. This was through an essay writing task selected from the list of essay topics they had settled upon earlier. The experimental design of the study is represented by Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1: Experimental Design of the Study**

The test instructions specified the essay length and essay components that were taught and practiced during the course. These are (1) mechanics, (2) content, (3) style, (4) logic, (5)

grammar, (6) vocabulary, (7) diction, and (8) rhetorical aspects (i.e. organization, cohesion, unity, topic, occasion and appropriateness to audience).

## Data Analysis

Data collected from the SLWAI were analyzed by summing the subjects' ratings of the 22 items. Fifteen statements in the SLWAI are negatively worded. The scale for these items was reversed so that strongly agree took (1) and strongly disagree took (5). Only seven items were positively worded. These are items 1, 4, 7, 17, 18, 21 and 22. The scale for these items ranged from 'strongly agree' taking (5) to 'strongly disagree' taking (1). This was done so that, in all instances, the higher the score, the higher the writing apprehension level and, correspondingly, the lower the score, the lower the writing apprehension level. Responses were processed statistically using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) – Version 18.

As for the essay writing tasks, two essay writing samples were collected from each of the 40 students in the control and the experimental groups, and all samples were typed to avoid handwriting effect in raters' scoring. Each of the typed samples was then photocopied twice and then rated by the researcher and another independent L2 writing instructor. Every participant was given eight sub-scores, which were then summed to obtain the participant's overall essay writing ability. The distribution of the overall mark of the essay writing task (100 marks) was approved by a group of jury members, including the EFL writing instructors.

Raters made use of a checklist of rubrics (see Appendix 4). Each of the written essays was read for an overall impression (Cooper, 1977) valuing its communicative aspect, and also to assess the student's work. For the scoring process, all the samples were appropriately coded and randomly mixed, so that neither the researcher nor the external rater knew whether a sample came from the *prêt*-test or the post-test sections. The marking process resulted in every participant given a score in each of the items of the checklist used by the raters as well as a summative score.

## Results

The findings of the analysis follow the order of research questions.

### **Research Question 1: What is the Current Level of Writing Apprehension Experienced by Saudi Orospective EFL Teachers?**

Responses to the SLWAI at the pre-intervention stage provide the answer to the first research question. These were summed up so that each participant in each of the control and experimental groups was given an overall score. The overall scores calculated indicate that participants in both groups had higher levels of writing apprehension at the pre-intervention stage. This signifies that students working individually and getting feedback from their teachers alone experienced higher levels of writing apprehension since all the scores are above the middle point, which is 66. This result validates the first hypothesis of the study. Assessing the extent to which there are differences between the control group participants and those of the experimental group in writing apprehension before intervention was a necessary step. The results of this comparison given in Table 1 below show no significant differences in this respect.

Groups' scores	Mean rank	Sig. (2-tailed)
Control group Scores	19.83	.337
Experimental group Scores	21.18	

**Table 1: Control and Experimental Groups Participants' SLWAI Scores before Intervention**

**Research Question 2: What is the Current Level of Saudi Prospective EFL Teachers' Essay Writing Ability?**

One aim of the study was to ascertain the current level of participants in essay writing (i.e. before intervention). The essay writing total scores of all participants were summed up of the sub-scores of the eight component skills of essay writing. The scores calculated for both groups' participants indicate that all participants suffered a very low level of essay writing ability. For example, in the control group all participants but one scored below the middle point which is 50. Likewise, none of the experimental group participants scored higher than the middle point. This finding indicates that participants in both groups had almost the same low level of essay writing ability. Participants' sub-scores showed that they had difficulties in the rhetorical aspects of essay-writing compared to the other seven components of essay writing process. This result validates the second hypothesis of the study (readers interested in the detailed raw scores of participants can contact the author via email). The pre-intervention scores of both groups' participants in essay writing were compared to see whether there are differences. Results of analysis given in Table 2 below show no significant differences in this respect.

Groups' scores	Mean rank	Sig. (2-tailed)
Control group pre-intervention EWT scores	22.55	.267
Experimental group post-intervention EWT scores	18.45	

**Table 2: Comparing Control Group and Experimental Group EWT Scores before Intervention**

Overall, investigation at the pre-intervention stage indicates that participants experience high levels of writing apprehension and low levels of essay writing ability.

**Research Question 3: What is the Effect of Peer Reviewing on Saudi Prospective EFL Teachers' Writing Apprehension?**

The SLWAI was administered to both groups at the end of the first semester of the academic year 2010-2011. The scores obtained from the first and second administrations of SLWAI were then compared. The control group participants obtained SLWAI scores that were more or less similar to the scores they obtained at the beginning of the intervention. Figures in Table 3 below show no statistically significant differences between the pre-intervention SLWAI scores and the post-intervention SLWAI scores of the control group participants. This indicates that the writing apprehension remained high for the control group participants till the end of the intervention.

Groups' scores	Mean rank	Sig.(2-tailed)
Control group pre-intervention SLWAI scores.	20.33	.924
Control group post-intervention SLWAI scores.	20.68	

**Table 3: Comparing the Control Group Participants' Pre-Intervention SLWAI Scores to their Post-Intervention SLWAI Scores**

Assessing the impact of using peer reviewing on the experimental group participants' writing apprehension was a major focus of this study. The participants' pre-intervention SLWAI scores and their post-intervention SLWAI scores were compared and differences between the raw scores were calculated. Figures in Table 4 below show statistically significant differences at the level of .01 between the participants' pre-intervention SLWAI scores and their post-intervention SLWAI scores, indicating a positive impact of the treatment represented in using peer reviewing on participants' feeling of writing apprehension.

Groups' Scores	Mean rank	Sig. (2-tailed) (p<.01)
Experimental group pre-intervention SLWAI scores	30.50	.000
Experimental group post-intervention SLWAI scores	10.50	

**Table (4): Differences between the Experimental Group Participants' Pre-Intervention SLWAI Scores and their Post-Intervention SLWAI Scores**

Comparing the post-intervention SLWAI scores of the experimental group participants to their control group counterparts' post-intervention SLWAI scores shows statistically significant differences at the level of .01 between both groups. Figures in Table 5 indicate that peer reviewing group participants experienced significantly less writing anxiety than the control group participants who got teacher feedback. This result nullifies the third hypothesis of the study.

Groups' scores	Mean rank	Sig. (2-tailed) (p<.01)
Post-intervention control group SLWAI scores	20.68	.007
Post-intervention experimental group SLWAI scores	10.50	

**Table 5: Differences between the Control Group and the Experimental Group Participants in the Post-Intervention SLWAI Scores**

**Research Question 4: What is the Effect of Using Peer Reviewing on Saudi Prospective EFL Teachers' Essay Writing Ability?**

To assess the impact of peer reviewing sessions on participants' essay writing ability, the total essay writing grades of participants were compared both within each group and between the two groups. Comparing the control group participants' pre-intervention essay writing grades to their post-intervention grades showed no statistically significant differences, as indicated by Table 6 below.

Groups' scores	Mean rank	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-intervention Control group EWT scores	20.85	.849
Post-intervention Control group EWT scores	20.15	

**Table 6: Comparing the Control Group Participants' EWT Pre-Test Scores to their EWT Post-Test Scores**

The impact of peer reviewing writing sessions on the experimental group participants' essay writing ability was assessed by comparing their pre-intervention essay writing scores to their post-intervention scores, as shown in Table 7 below.

Groups	Mean rank	Sig. (2-tailed) (p<.01)
Pre-intervention Experimental group EWT scores	10.50	.000
Post-intervention Experimental group EWT scores	30.50	

**Table 7: Comparing the Experimental Group participants' Pre-Intervention EWT Scores to their Post-Intervention EWT Scores**

The results show statistically significant differences at the level of .01 between the experimental group participants' pre-intervention EWT scores and their post-intervention EWT scores, indicating a positive impact of using peer reviewing in participant's essay writing ability. This result nullifies the fourth hypothesis of the study.

## Discussion

This study aimed to ascertain the current level of writing apprehension experienced by Saudi prospective EFL teachers. Findings of the data analysis indicated that the participants' SLWAI scores in both experimental and control groups were above the middle point at the pre-intervention stage highlighting a high writing apprehension level suffered by all the participants of the study. This finding is concurrent with findings of other research studies that aimed to assess the writing apprehension level of ESL university students (e.g. Atay and Kurt, 2006; Min, 2005; Chuo, 2007; Abdel Latif, 2007; Rankin-Brown, 2004; etc.). For example, Atay and Kurt's (2006) study assessed the writing apprehension of prospective EFL teachers in Turkey. The results of this study showed that the majority of the Turkish prospective teachers of English had high and average writing apprehension. Many of the participants expressed inability to organize their thoughts and produce ideas as the major difficulties they had during the L2 writing process. Besides, Min's (2005) study revealed that, as reviewers, students benefited from this training on peer reviewing in confidence build-up. Also, Abdel Latif's (2007) study attempted to identify the factors that account for the Egyptian English majors' negative writing affect, i.e. their high English writing apprehension and low English writing self-efficacy. Data analysis showed that the subjects had high English writing apprehension. In a study by Rankin-Brown (2004), the aim was to determine the specific causes of writing apprehension for a group of advanced-level English language learners preparing to enter university-level courses who reported experiencing high levels of writing apprehension. Results of the "*English as a Second Language Writing Apprehension Test*" used by Gungle and Taylor (1989) indicated that participants were experiencing a high degree of writing apprehension.

Findings of the study at the post-intervention stage highlighted the positive impact of peer reviewing in reducing the writing apprehension level for the experimental group participants. This was proved by the experimental group participants' pre and post tests SLWAI scores. This finding echoes other research studies that addressed the same issues (e.g. Hassan, 2001; Kurt and Atay, 2007; Magno, 2008; etc). For example, Hassan's (2001) study of the relationship of writing apprehension composition writing for EFL university students found out that low apprehension students wrote better quality compositions than their high apprehension counterparts. Likewise, Kurt and Atay (2007) found out the positive impact of peer reviewing on lowering writing anxiety of EFL major student teachers who became more aware of their mistakes. Also, Magno (2008) found out that writing apprehension was one of the factors that predicted writing proficiency in English for a sample of 159 college students.

The findings of the study indicated that peer reviewing had a positive effect on developing participants' essay writing ability. This finding echoes findings of other ESL research studies (Shaw, 2002; Rollinson, 2005; Wu, 2006; Fallahi, et al., 2006; Zheng, 2007; Gielen et al., 2010; etc.). For example, Shaw (2002) discovered the motivating impact of peer reviewing in the training of writing skills for college students. Gielen et al.'s (2010) study showed the positive impact on students' writing performance. Wen-Shuenn (2006) explored positive impacts of blog peer reviews compared to teacher feedback on EFL adult learners' compositions. Besides, Fallahi, et al.'s (2006) study showed positive impact of peer reviewing on students' writing quality. Zhang's (2007) study found out that peer error feedback is an effective alternative way and an interesting learning process through which students can learn with ease.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The results of this study should reassure writing instructors that peer reviews can be used by students and that writing instructors should integrate peer reviewing into the writing classroom with confidence that this feedback can be effective and can be used by many students in their revisions. The fact that the multiple-draft process did result in better essays should encourage teachers to make revision and re-writing, combined with meaningful peer and teacher feedback, an integral part of the writing classroom. These results also show the importance of analyzing not only what kinds of changes students are making to their work, but what effect these changes might have on the overall improvement of their essays. The findings of the study suggest that writing skills improvement courses be taught to university students in nontraditional ways. To lower anxiety levels among students it is also suggested that teacher evaluation be reduced and replaced with peer or self-evaluation whenever possible. Thus, writing should be taught as a process and not as only a product. EFL major student teachers need to realize that they can work on the process instead of having to achieve perfection in the first draft. This helps to sensitize future EFL teachers to the importance of process in writing and that perfection does not come out all of a sudden. Besides, orientating EFL student teachers with the significance of peer reviewing would help to sensitize them as future EFL teachers to the significance of having their students work together and become more autonomous and less reliant on the teacher.

Moreover, students should be orientated about the role of peer feedback so students know the motivation for wanting to help one another improve. Doing otherwise would make students feel that anything instructors have written on their assignment papers (even positive comments) as something negative. On the other hand, if students realize that having the instructors write a lot of suggestions and comments means they care a lot, then they feel less threatened by all the "red ink" on the paper.



As far as writing apprehension is concerned, EFL writing instructors should emphasize clarity and fluency over correctness of form in their assessment of their students' writing products. They should avoid being 'Grammar Nazis.' This helps to alleviate the apprehension they might have about writing. Doing otherwise just fuels anxiety when students think they cannot master something as "simple" as grammar. This can be done through using "task-oriented" questions that are designed to focus students' attention on improving and expanding the content, such as: "Could you write about how this example relates to the main point of your essay?" or "Provide a more-detailed example to support your point." Students then have a specific task to accomplish and know exactly what it needs instead of trying to interpret teacher comments that are not task-oriented, such as "This is vague," or "Unsupported argument."

The training on peer reviewing proved effective in reducing students' feeling of writing apprehension. The face-to-face discussions with students (especially apprehensive students) gave them a chance to explain their choices and clarify a lot of misconceptions related to peer reviewing.

The results of the present study emphasize the integrative nature of writing skill. The students with low English linguistic knowledge were found to have higher writing apprehension. The instructional practices those students have been exposed to should not be ignored as well. Teachers need to help those students overcome their negative English writing affect by adopting a comprehensive approach to teaching writing that could meet their strategic, linguistic and psychological needs.

Further research needs to explore how students with different levels of writing apprehension differ in their writing process and product, and what relative influence writing apprehension exerts on writing performance when compared to other variables such as language proficiency. Finally, intervention techniques and approaches proposed for helping student writers to have more positive writing affect need to be tested to determine their effectiveness.

Only 40 EFL student teachers were investigated in this study, which limits the generalizability of the results. Also limiting generalizability was the order and the type of the feedback given. Besides, the fact that the researcher was the teacher of the class may have affected the objectivity of the study to some extent. The teacher/researcher conducted class and provided feedback in his usual manner, yet the knowledge that a research study was in progress may have influenced his teaching in some way. The students were also aware that a research study was in progress though they did not have any information about the focus of the study. Regardless, it is possible that they may have behaved differently than they normally would have had they not been participating in the study. Despite these limitations, the combination of data collection and analysis procedures used in this study provides some insight into one example of a typical Saudi EFL classroom and how peer reviewing could positively influence students' writing of writing apprehension and their essay writing ability.

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**Appendix 1: Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (Source: Cheng, 2004)**

Read the statements below very carefully and tick (✓) the most suitable response for you. (Note: SA= Strongly Agree, A=Agree, U=Undecided, D=Disagree, and SD=Strongly Disagree.

	STATEMENTS	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	While writing in English, I am not nervous at all.	---	---	---	---	---
2	I feel my heart pounding when I write English compositions under time constraint.	---	---	---	---	---
3	While writing English compositions, I feel worried and uneasy if I know they will be evaluated.	---	---	---	---	---
4	I often choose to write down my thoughts in English.	---	---	---	---	---
5	I usually do my best to avoid writing English compositions	---	---	---	---	---
6	My mind often goes blank when I start to work on an English composition.	---	---	---	---	---
7	I don't worry that my English compositions are a lot worse than others.	---	---	---	---	---
8	I tremble or perspire when I write English compositions under time pressure.	---	---	---	---	---
9	If my English composition is to be evaluated, I would worry about getting a very poor grade.	---	---	---	---	---
10	I do my best to avoid situations in which I have to write in English	---	---	---	---	---
11	My thoughts become jumbled when I write English compositions under time constraint.	---	---	---	---	---
12	Unless I have no choice, I would not use English to write compositions.	---	---	---	---	---
13	I often feel panic when I write English compositions under time constraint.	---	---	---	---	---
14	I am afraid that the other students would deride my English composition if they read it.	---	---	---	---	---
15	I freeze up when unexpectedly asked to write English compositions.	---	---	---	---	---
16	I would do my best to excuse myself if asked to write English compositions.	---	---	---	---	---
17	I don't worry at all about what other people would think of my English compositions.	---	---	---	---	---
18	I usually seek every possible chance to write English compositions outside of class.	---	---	---	---	---
19	I usually feel my whole body rigid and tense when write English compositions.	---	---	---	---	---
20	I am afraid of my English composition being chosen as a sample for discussion in class.	---	---	---	---	---
21	I am not afraid at all that my English compositions would be rated as very poor.	---	---	---	---	---
22	Whenever possible, I would use English to write compositions.	---	---	---	---	---

## Appendix 2: Outline of PowerPoint Presentation on Peer Review

Slide one: Title: Peer Review

Slide two: Peer Review? What is that?

*Objective feedback*

- Seeing someone's text from your own perspective
- Explaining to them how you 'see' it
- Being kind, yet honest, in the process

Slide three: *The 'Who' of Peer Review: Who is the best person to review your writing?*

- Peers... because they probably think like you
- Instructors... because they know what they hope to teach you
- Friends... because they can catch mistakes you do not see

Slide four: The 'What' of Peer Review

- *What is the best way to 'use' Peer Review?*
  - *Response-Centered Workshops*
    - Peers note their personal responses to the text
    - Writer of the text listens but does not enter conversation
    - Process-based
  - *Advice-Centered Workshops*
    - Peers first review and then give advice on the text
    - Writer and Reviewer then talk together
    - Product-based

Slide Five: The 'Where' of Peer Review: *Where does Peer Review work best?*

- Peer Review works best in a structured environment
  - Classrooms
  - Conferences
  - Writing Lab
- The Writing Lab at Purdue *is* Peer Review
  - Thirty-minute sessions
  - Assignment
  - Feedback

Slide Six: The 'When' of Peer Review

- *When does Peer Review work best?*
  - *When you need overall feedback*
    - How does it sound?
    - What do you think?
    - Does it make sense?
  - *When you need specific feedback*
    - Thesis statement
    - Topic Sentences
    - Organization
    - Introduction
    - Conclusion
    - Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling
    - Syntax

Slide Seven: *The 'Why' of Peer Review: Why does Peer Review work?*

- We see our writing 'through' another person
- We see how other students think and write
- We see others' writing strengths & weaknesses

- We see new ideas and new ways of explaining ideas
- We learn to look at our *own* writing in a different way

Slide Eight: *The 'How' of Peer Review:*

Peer Review works by being a helpful reader

- *Ways you can respond as a helpful reader:*
  - If you get confused or lost
    - Mark an 'X' in the text where you are confused
    - Ask the writer to explain his ideas
    - Ask the writer to state his thesis
    - Ask the writer to state the question the thesis answers
    - Help the writer to brainstorm (mapping, outlining, etc.)
    - Ask the writer to fill in the blanks:
      - My purpose in this paper is \_\_\_\_\_.
      - My purpose in this section is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - If you cannot see the point
    - Ask the writer 'So what?' questions.
    - In other words, ask the writer
      - 'What does this sentence have to do with your thesis?'
      - 'What does this point have to do with this paragraph?'
      - 'What does this paragraph have to do with the paper?'
  - Playing devil's advocate
    - Counter the writer's stance or thesis
    - Bring up other perspectives
    - Ask the writer 'why' and 'how' questions
  - Offer more examples and details to the writer
  - Leave the final decisions to the writer

Slide Nine: *The Allyn & Bacon Guide to Writing:*

Response-Centered Workshops:

1. Ask students to bring in four copies of their papers.
2. Divide the class into groups of three or four students.
3. Ask one student to read a paper aloud.
4. Students then make notes on their copies, making note of where they understand, are confused, think the writer makes a good point, feel they need more information, etc.
5. Each group member orally explains his notes.
6. Each writer member listens without making comments.

Advice-Centered Workshops:

1. Ask students to bring in four copies of their papers.
2. Divide the class into groups of four students.
3. Each group of four divides into pairs.
4. Each pair exchanges papers with the other pair.
5. Working collaboratively, each pair reviews the two papers, one at a time, orally discussing the paper.
6. The reviewers write down advice to the writer on the paper.
7. Papers are returned to their owners.
8. If time permits, the group members discuss their comments orally.



### **Appendix 3: Peer-Review Form Used by Experimental Group Participants in Peer Reviewing Sessions**

Remember that the purpose of a peer review is to provide your classmate with honest but helpful reactions and responses as the reader of this essay. Read the essay tonight and answer these questions as completely as possible. Tomorrow you will discuss the ideas in this essay with your partner. Be sure to discuss specific ways in which the essay can be improved. Everyone will have a chance to revise this essay from their partner's suggestions. Remember, you are reading and discussing how well the IDEAS are presented in this essay. **DO NOT** spend time talking about the GRAMMAR!

1. What do you like the best about the ideas in this essay? Be specific. (precise vocabulary, cohesive/linked ideas, clear/easy to follow, convincing, effective reasoning, well-developed ideas, attention-grabbing introduction, strong conclusion, intriguing style, well-supported topic sentences, understandable transitions, etc.)
2. Underline the writer's position statement of opinion. Discuss with your partner whether this is accurate.
3. How many reasons and supporting proof are provided? Do all of these reasons logically support the writer's opinion? Explain. How well do these reasons persuade you that the author's opinion is the correct one?
4. Are there any ideas in the essay that are not clear or that you find confusing?
5. Write a 'C' next to these and discuss them tomorrow with the writer.
6. Are there any ideas in the essay that need further development? About which parts of the essay would you like more information? Write a 'D' next to these areas and discuss them with your partner tomorrow.
7. How effective is the conclusion? Does it satisfy you as a reader?
8. Write down three specific suggestions you have for how the reader could most improve this essay.
9. When you are finished with these points, ask the writer what areas of this essay he or she would like you to comment on.
10. What are your overall thoughts about this essay?

### **Appendix 4: Checklist of Rubrics Used by Raters of Participants' Written Essays**

#### **A "6" essay will:**

- respond fully to the writing prompt.
- state a clear thesis (main idea).
- provide strong support for or clearly illustrate that thesis through specific reasons, examples, and/or details.
- have a logical and effective organization.
- develop its ideas thoroughly.
- be grammatically clear and correct throughout.
- use words and stylistic techniques appropriately.
- demonstrate variety in sentence structure and vocabulary.

#### **A "5" essay will:**

- respond to the essay prompt, but may not address all aspects of the task with equal effectiveness.
- have a thesis.
- be sufficiently developed (e.g., four or five fully developed paragraphs).

- provide specific reasons, examples, and details to support or illustrate its thesis.
- have an overall effective organization.
- be grammatically clear and correct throughout most of the essay.
- demonstrate some variety in sentence structure and vocabulary.

**A “4” essay will:**

- respond to the essay prompt, but may omit some aspects of the task.
- have a thesis, but it may be unclear or insufficiently focused.
- be adequately developed (e.g., four solid paragraphs).
- use some reasons, details, and/or examples to support or illustrate its thesis.
- have a reasonable organization, though it may not be the most effective or logical approach.
- demonstrate less fluency with grammar and usage with errors that occasionally cloud meaning.
- have less variety in sentence structure and a more limited vocabulary.

**A “3” essay will have one or more of the following flaws. It may:**

- respond only to part of the prompt.
- not have a clear thesis.
- be underdeveloped (e.g., only two or three short paragraphs).
- not provide relevant or sufficient support for its thesis.
- have a weak or illogical organization.
- use words and phrases inappropriately.
- have a number of grammatical errors, some of which lead to confusion regarding meaning.
- demonstrate a lack of variety in sentence structure and/or vocabulary.

**A “2” essay will have one or more of the following serious weaknesses. It may:**

- lack a clear thesis or focus.
- not develop its ideas (e.g., only two short paragraphs).
- provide little or no reasons, details, or specific examples to support its ideas.
- offer support that is irrelevant.
- be poorly organized (no clear organizational strategy).
- have serious and frequent grammatical errors, often leading to confusion regarding meaning.

**A “1” essay may have one or more of the following characteristics. It may:**

- be incoherent.
- be seriously underdeveloped (e.g., only one paragraph).
- have serious and persistent grammatical errors.
- use words and grammatical structures incorrectly and inappropriately.

**A “0” will be given to an essay that:**

- is blank.
- does not respond to the writing prompt given (discusses a different topic).
- simply copies the writing prompt instead of responding to it.
- is written in a foreign language.
- is a series of random keystrokes.