

An In-depth Inquiry into the Complexities of Composition Writing Among Higher Education Students in Oman

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Abstract

This study digs into the specific writing challenges faced by higher education students in Oman, employing a mixed-methods approach including surveys, focus group interviews, and class observations. The research uncovers key difficulties in idea generation, such as students struggling to brainstorm topics, and issues with transitions, where many find it challenging to connect paragraphs coherently. It also reveals common problems in word choice, with students frequently using inappropriate or repetitive language, and in referencing, where inconsistencies and inaccuracies in citation styles are noted. Furthermore, the study identifies frequent spelling errors and grammatical inaccuracies, impacting the overall clarity of students' writing. The findings underscore the necessity for targeted writing instruction that focuses on these specific areas. The study advocates for the integration of comprehensive writing instruction into the curriculum and the implementation of support systems like online writing platforms and dedicated writing centers. These interventions aim to enhance students' writing skills, thereby preparing them better for academic and professional endeavors. The research offers valuable insights for refining curriculum design and teaching practices in Oman's higher education system, with a focus on improving students' composition writing abilities.

Keywords: writing challenges, higher education students, Oman, mixed-methods, case study

1. Introduction

Academic writing is fundamental to higher education, serving as a critical component of a student's educational journey (Hyland, 2003). Despite its importance, mastering the skill of composition writing remains a challenging task for a significant number of students (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). In non-native English-speaking countries such as Oman, the language barrier exacerbates these challenges, since English is typically the medium of instruction in higher education, yet it is not the student's first language (Al-Issa, 2007). Proficiency in composition writing carries significant weight. It enables students to demonstrate their knowledge, facilitate their critical thinking, and promote effective communication of ideas (Zamel & Spack, 2004). Given this context, it is crucial to understand and address the issues that Omani higher education students face concerning composition writing.

1.1 Background of the Study

Effective written communication is vital in higher education, serving as an indicator of academic achievement (Hyland, 2002). In Oman, transitioning from Arabic instruction in secondary education to English in higher education poses challenges for students, especially in L2 academic writing (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012). While research has explored English language learning challenges in Oman (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012; Al-Mahrooqi & Troudi, 2014), limited studies focus on composition writing nuances, including adherence to academic conventions, pedagogical methods, and feedback's role. This study aims to address this gap using a mixed-methods approach, aiming to offer comprehensive insights into composition writing challenges among Omani higher education students.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

This study aims to explore and delineate the specific difficulties that Omani higher education students encounter in composition writing.

- To identify the key challenges that higher education students in Oman face in composition writing.
- To analyze the extent of these challenges from both a quantitative (questionnaire survey) and qualitative (interviews, focus groups, and case studies) perspective.
- To explore the experiences and perceptions of Omani higher education students in relation to these composition writing challenges.
- To assess the impact of teaching methods on composition writing challenges based on classroom observations.
- To recommend strategies or interventions to help mitigate these composition-writing challenges based on the study's findings.

1.3 Research Questions

- Based on the above objectives, the following research questions were advanced:
- What are the key challenges that higher education students in Oman face in composition writing?
- To what extent do these composition-writing challenges affect higher education students in Oman, as identified through quantitative and qualitative research methods?
- How do Omani higher education students perceive and experience the challenges associated with composition writing?
- What impact do current teaching methods observed in classrooms have on the composition writing challenges faced by higher education students in Oman?
- Based on the findings of the study, what strategies or interventions can be recommended to mitigate the composition writing challenges encountered by higher education students in Oman?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is significant both theoretically and practically, addressing composition-writing challenges in higher education in Oman. It aims to enrich the current theoretical understanding of second language (L2) writing by offering a holistic view of the challenges, blending linguistic details with pedagogical and contextual aspects. Practically, the findings can influence Omani higher education teaching practices and curriculum design, guiding interventions to address specific student challenges. The results also have potential policy implications, suggesting reforms in English language teaching approaches, favouring student-centric methods, improved feedback, and support for transitioning students (Hyland, 2002). Ultimately, addressing these writing challenges not only bolsters academic achievement but also prepares students for global professional landscapes.

1.5 Research Paradigm

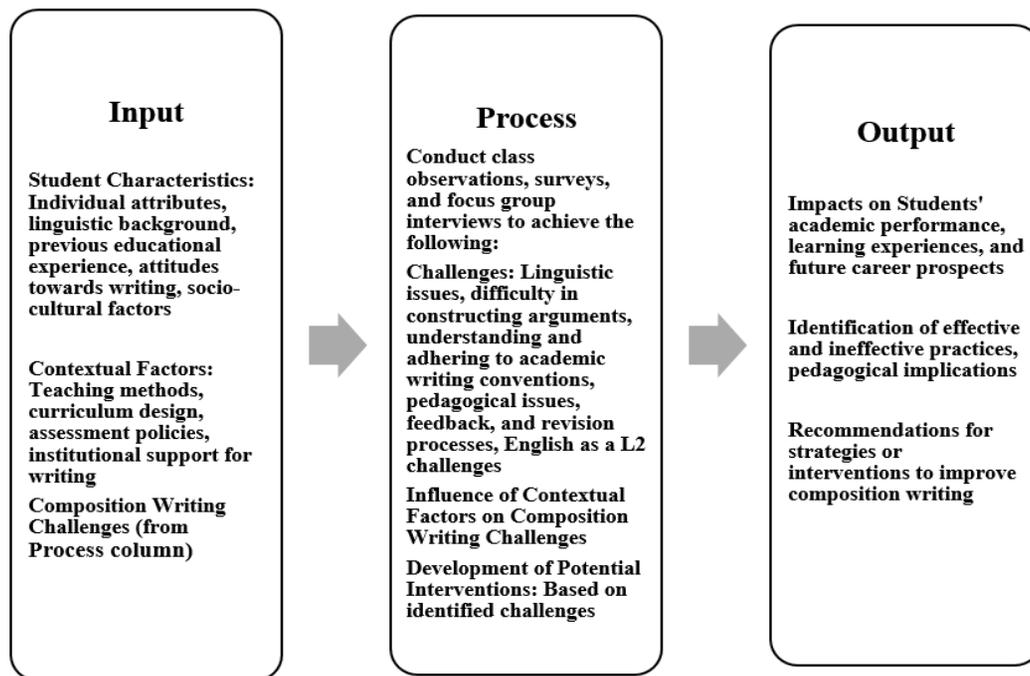


Figure 1. IPO Framework

2. Literature Review

This study integrates both Sociocultural Theory and the Process Theory of Writing, offering a comprehensive lens to examine composition challenges faced by higher education students in Oman. Rooted in Vygotsky's work (1978), sociocultural theory emphasizes learning as a socially and culturally influenced process. This study uses this theory to explore how Omani higher education's classroom practices, pedagogy, and institutional aspects influence students' writing difficulties, considering the complex interplay between students, their contexts, and their writing habits. The Process Theory of Writing, posited by Flower & Hayes (1981), views writing as a cyclical, cognitive activity with stages like prewriting, drafting, and revising. This framework guides our exploration of students' challenges across writing stages and underscores the importance of feedback and revision processes.

2.1 General Composition Writing Challenges in Higher Education Globally

For students everywhere, composition writing in higher education comes with a variety of difficulties. According to Horowitz (1986), students often struggle with developing coherent arguments, using suitable academic language, and following established writing patterns. Furthermore, many people are concerned about plagiarism and the proper citation of sources (Pecorari, 2003). These difficulties often result from students' transition from high school to college, where there are far higher demands for writing quality, independence, and complexity (Hinkel, 2004).

2.2 Key Theories or Models Used to Understand These Challenges

Theories that shed light on these difficulties include the Process Theory of Writing. According to Flower and Hayes' (1981) idea, prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing are only a few of the phases that writing goes through. It asserts that issues with these cognitive processes are often the root cause of problems with composition writing. This viewpoint has brought to light the necessity for instructional strategies that concentrate not just on the written work but also on the writing process, helping students to organize, prepare, write, and revise their assignments (Graham & Perin, 2007).

2.3 Common Pedagogical Practices and Their Impact on Composition Writing

Common pedagogical practices in teaching composition include teacher-centered methods, where teachers primarily lecture about writing rules and concepts, and student-centered methods, where students actively engage in writing activities and collaborative work (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). Research has increasingly highlighted the value of student-centered, process-oriented approaches. These approaches, which often involve activities such as peer review, collaborative writing, and writing workshops, have been found to effectively support students' development of writing skills by allowing them to actively engage with and reflect on the writing process (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009).

2.4 Studies Examining Composition Writing Challenges in the Context of L2 Learning

Writing in an L2 presents unique challenges, as students must master not only general composition skills but also the nuances of a new language and writing tradition (Silva, 1993). Linguistic issues, including grammar, vocabulary, and syntax, are common areas of struggle (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). More advanced issues, like achieving cohesion and coherence, can also pose significant difficulties for L2 writers (Balida and Encarnacion, 2020; Connor, 1996).

2.5 Unique Aspects of These Challenges

L2 writers often face challenges in achieving grammatical accuracy and proper vocabulary, affecting the clarity of their compositions (Ferris, 2003). Additionally, adapting to new cultural conventions in writing, such as argumentation style and rhetorical patterns, is complex (Kaplan, 1966). Feedback in L2 writing instruction is crucial, yet both students and educators face challenges; students in understanding and applying feedback, and educators in providing clear and effective feedback (Ferris, 2014). Emphasizing a formative, process-oriented feedback approach can aid students in enhancing their writing (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

2.6 Overview of Studies Examining Composition Writing

Research into composition writing challenges in the Middle East, and specifically Oman, is relatively limited. However, the existing studies highlight similar issues to those found globally, along with unique factors associated with the local cultural and linguistic context. Al-Jarf (2004) found that Saudi Arabian students face challenges with vocabulary, grammar, and coherence when writing in English, much like their international counterparts. In Oman, Al-Issa (2002) found similar difficulties, with students struggling to meet the academic writing standards expected at the university level.

2.7 Unique Cultural, Linguistic, and Educational Factors Contributing to these Challenges

Omani students' English composition may be influenced by Arabic writing norms. Kaplan's (1966) contrastive rhetoric indicates that Arabic speakers might struggle with English writing due to differences in argumentation styles; Arabic is more circular, whereas English favours a direct approach. Differences in vocabulary, grammar, and syntax between the languages also challenge Arabic-speaking students in English academic writing (Ryding, 2005). English teaching in Oman typically prioritizes reading and listening overwriting (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012). Traditional, teacher-centered methods may further limit writing practice opportunities (Al-Issa, 2005).

2.8 Teaching Practices and Institutional Support

Composition studies emphasize the role of instructional methods and institutional support in shaping students' writing abilities. Ferris and Hedgcock (2014) note that teaching methods significantly influence writing proficiency. Additionally, institutional aids like writing centers boost students' skills (Leki, 2007). Process-oriented approaches, emphasizing the cyclical nature of writing, enhance writing capabilities (Graham & Perin, 2007), as do genre-based techniques which teach an understanding of different writing styles (Hyland, 2007). Feedback is essential, with Ferris (2003) suggesting timely, comprehensive remarks. Peer review also benefits students by offering insights from their counterparts (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). For those struggling, interventions like workshops or tutoring offer targeted assistance (Severino, 1993).

2.9 Gaps in the Literature

Research on composition writing reveals gaps and inconsistencies. Notably, there is a lack of studies focused on Oman and other Middle

Eastern countries, with most research centered on Western or East Asian contexts, potentially overlooking unique linguistic and cultural factors in Oman (Al-Issa, 2002). While many studies target specific writing aspects, like language proficiency or genre familiarity, comprehensive approaches integrating instructional methods and institutional supports are limited (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). Moreover, findings on educational interventions, such as peer review, are inconsistent (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Cho & MacArthur, 2010).

2.10 Justification for the Current Study in the Context of These Gaps

Given the deficiencies and contradictions, the new research is in a good position to advance the subject. This study will provide much-needed insights into the unique difficulties higher education students in Oman experience by concentrating on the Omani environment.

The study's mixed-methods methodology enables a thorough analysis of composition writing issues, taking into account pedagogical and institutional elements in addition to language and academic hurdles.

This study will add to the continuing debates regarding effective pedagogical techniques for enhancing composition-writing abilities by investigating the effects of different classroom practices and interventions.

3. Methodology

3.1 Quantitative Procedure

A structured questionnaire, informed by Bryman (2012), was used to gather quantitative data on students' experiences with composition writing, covering aspects like sentence structure, grammar, argumentation skills, and academic writing practices. Eighty students from various Omani higher education institutions participated using a convenience sampling method due to practical constraints, though this method may not offer the representativeness of random sampling (Neuman, 2013). Analysis of the data utilized statistical software, which according to Crisostomo et al. (2020), generating descriptive statistics and employing inferential tests like chi-square and ANOVA to examine correlations and statistical significance.

Table 1. Scale for Verbal Interpretation

Scale Range	Verbal Interpretation
5.00	Very High
4.00 - 4.99	High
3.00 - 3.99	Moderate
2.00 - 2.99	Low
1.00 - 1.99	Very Low

Table 1 shows following scale used to interpret the level of challenge.

3.2 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were integral to the research design (Bryman, 2012). Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they were fully aware of the study's aims and their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously maintained, with all identifying information removed or altered to prevent the recognition of individual participants. This consideration was especially critical given the sensitive nature of sharing personal writing experiences, which may reveal vulnerabilities in language proficiency and academic competencies.

3.3 Qualitative Procedure

The participant group for qualitative data collection was carefully selected to provide rich, context-specific insights into the composition writing challenges faced by higher education students in Oman. A purposive sampling strategy was employed, selecting 15 students who had previously completed the questionnaire survey. These individuals were chosen based on criteria such as diversity in academic disciplines, year of study, and writing proficiency levels, aiming to capture a broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The intention was to ensure that the findings would be reflective of the varied composition writing challenges across different student demographics.

To foster a dynamic exchange of ideas and in-depth discussion, three focus groups were formed, each with six to eight members, facilitating a balanced representation of experiences while remaining small enough to allow each participant to contribute meaningfully. English writing class observations were conducted to glean insights into the pedagogical approaches and classroom interactions that potentially influence students' writing development (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

In tracking the development of a subgroup of students' writing skills throughout the semester, a cross-case synthesis was applied. This method facilitated a nuanced comparison of individual and collective writing progressions, shedding light on commonalities and divergences in the students' development and the persistence of certain writing challenges (Yin, 2014).

4. Results

4.1 Quantitative Results

Table 2. Respondents' Profile

Gender	Number of Participants	Academic Level	Number of Participants
Male	48	GFP Level	11
Female	60	GFP Level 2	47
		GFP Level 3	19
		Year 1	8
		Year 2	21
		Year 3	2

The study involved 108 participants: 48 males (44%) and 60 females (56%). In terms of academic levels, 11 were at GFP Level, 47 in GFP Level 2, 19 in GFP Level 3, 8 in Year 1, 21 in Year 2, and 2 in Year 3. This profile highlights the participants' gender and academic stages, aiding in the analysis of their writing challenges and potential group variations.

Table 3. Research Question 1 - What are the key challenges that higher education students in Oman face in composition writing?

Research Question 2- To what extent do these composition-writing challenges affect higher education students in Oman, as identified through quantitative and qualitative research methods?

Writing Challenge	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	SD
Coming up with ideas for writing	2.82	Low	0.85
Finding sources of inspiration for writing	2.78	Low	0.88
Making smooth transitions between paragraphs	2.79	Low	0.86
Continuing writing when getting stuck	2.81	Low	0.86
Choosing the right words to express thoughts	3.11	Moderate	0.90
Proofreading and editing work effectively	2.79	Low	0.88
Writing references and in-text citations	2.65	Low	1.00
Spelling words correctly in writing	2.88	Low	0.89
Getting feedback on writing	2.61	Low	0.87
Revising and improving writing based on feedback	2.84	Low	0.83
Using grammar and sentence structure correctly	3.10	Moderate	0.86

The table showed participants found "Choosing the right words to express thoughts" as the most challenging, with a mean score of 3.11. Other notable challenges included "Using grammar and sentence structure correctly" (mean = 3.10) and "Revising and improving writing based on feedback" (mean = 2.84). Less challenging areas ranged from scores of 2.78 to 2.82, including generating ideas and making smooth transitions between paragraphs. High standard deviations imply wider variations in perceptions of certain challenges.

These results resonate with the socio-cognitive theory of writing, which describes writing as a cognitive task influenced by social and cultural contexts (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Challenges like generating ideas and word choice correspond with research focusing on the cognitive complexities of writing (Kellogg, 1996; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). Difficulties in referencing link with the importance of understanding academic conventions (Pecorari, 2013; Howard, 1995). The findings echo previous research on writing challenges in higher education (Graham & Perin, 2007; Hu & Li, 2018) and highlight the need for specific interventions to enhance student writing.

4.2 Qualitative Findings

During the focus group, students were engaged in a semi-structured interview to discuss their composition writing challenges in higher education. After an icebreaker, participants shared their backgrounds, majors, and academic year. The conversation centered on specific writing challenges, covering topics from brainstorming to aspects like organization and grammar. The influence of factors like language proficiency, culture, and prior instruction was also probed. Participants discussed strategies they use to overcome writing hurdles and assessed existing support systems. The potential of peer feedback and collaboration in enhancing writing skills was explored. Key findings suggest Omani students face multifaceted writing challenges, underscoring the need for comprehensive support strategies.

Table 4. Research Question 3- How do Omani higher education students perceive and experience the challenges associated with composition writing?

Research Question 4 - What impact do current teaching methods observed in classrooms have on the composition writing challenges faced by higher education students in Oman?

Theme	Description
Linguistic Challenges	Many students face difficulties with vocabulary usage, sentence structure, and grammar.
Difficulty in Constructing Arguments	Students reported challenges in developing coherent arguments and counterarguments in their writing.
Understanding and Adhering to Academic Writing Conventions	Students expressed difficulties in understanding and adhering to the conventions of academic writing, such as essay structure, citation, and maintaining an academic tone.
Pedagogical Issues	Classroom observations revealed a dominance of teacher-centered methods, limiting students' active engagement with composition writing.
Feedback and Revision	Students reported receiving feedback that was often delayed or vague, making it challenging for them to improve their writing skills effectively.
Challenges Specific to English as an L2	Many students highlighted the challenge of writing academically in an L2, describing the struggle of thinking in Arabic and writing in English.

Consistent with the questionnaire findings, the qualitative data highlighted that many students grapple with linguistic issues. These challenges, as mentioned by students in both interviews and focus groups, include vocabulary usage, sentence structure, and grammar. Several students pointed out their struggle to express complex ideas due to a limited English vocabulary. Case studies corroborated these issues, as evidenced by frequent grammatical errors and simplistic language use in students' writing samples.

Another common theme was the difficulty in constructing well-reasoned arguments and counterarguments. Many students shared during the interviews that they often struggle to develop their arguments coherently, which was also reflected in the writing samples collected during the case study analysis.

Participants expressed difficulties understanding the conventions of academic writing, such as structuring an essay, citing sources, and maintaining an appropriate academic tone. This theme was especially prevalent in focus group discussions, where participants echoed similar experiences.

Classroom observations revealed that teaching methods were predominantly teacher-centered, limiting opportunities for students to actively engage with and practice composition writing. Students in both interviews and focus groups expressed the need for more interactive and practical classroom activities to enhance their writing skills.

The lack of constructive feedback and opportunities for revision was another theme that emerged from the interviews. Students stated that feedback was often delayed or vague, making it challenging to improve their writing skills effectively.

Unique to the context of Oman, many students mentioned the challenge of writing academically in an L2. This theme came up frequently in interviews, where students discussed the struggle of *'thinking in Arabic but having to write in English'*. This challenge of thinking in Arabic while writing in English warrants a thorough examination due to its linguistic and cognitive implications. This could involve an in-depth analysis of how students navigate the cognitive translation process, the specific linguistic hurdles encountered, and the strategies students use to align their thought patterns with the conventions of English academic writing. Qualitative data provide insights into students' cognitive processes, emotional responses to these challenges, and the impact on their identity as bilingual writers.

Investigating these themes more closely would require collecting data from a variety of sources, such as detailed student journals, in-depth interviews with students and faculty, and possibly classroom recordings. This enriched data would not only offer a deeper understanding of the nuanced challenges Omani students face but also contribute to the development of more effective, culturally responsive writing instruction methods.

4.3 Class Observation Findings

During the observation of the writing class, several notable aspects emerged. The classroom environment was conducive to learning, with students engaged in individual and collaborative writing activities. The instructor fostered a supportive atmosphere, encouraging students to express their ideas freely and providing guidance as needed.

The lesson began with a warm-up activity to stimulate creativity and generate ideas for writing. Students enthusiastically participated, sharing their thoughts and brainstorming potential topics. This demonstrated their willingness to engage in the writing process and their ability to generate ideas.

As the class progressed, the instructor focused on teaching strategies for making smooth transitions between paragraphs. Students practiced identifying transition words and phrases and then applied them in their own writing assignments. Through peer feedback and instructor guidance, they refined their skills in creating cohesive and coherent written pieces.

One challenge that surfaced during the observation was the students' struggle with spelling words correctly. Some students exhibited

difficulties in applying spelling rules and accurately spelling commonly used words. The instructor addressed this challenge by providing spelling exercises and incorporating spelling lessons into the curriculum.

Throughout the observation, the instructor emphasized the importance of revising and improving writing based on feedback. Students actively participated in peer review sessions, offering constructive suggestions and implementing revisions in their drafts. The instructor provided guidance on effective revision strategies and encouraged students to reflect on their writing process and make meaningful improvements.

The class observation displayed a positive learning environment where students were actively engaged in various writing activities. The instructor's instructional strategies aimed to address specific writing challenges, such as transitions and spelling, while also fostering a culture of revision and improvement. The observation highlighted the importance of providing targeted instruction and support to enhance student's writing skills and promote their growth as confident writers.

4.4 Discussion

The interpretation of results in the context of the research objectives and existing literature reveals valuable insights into the writing challenges among higher education students in Oman. The identified challenges align with the research objectives of understanding the difficulties students face in composition writing.

The findings highlight that students encounter challenges in various aspects of writing, such as generating ideas, making smooth transitions, choosing the right words, and using proper grammar and sentence structure. These findings are consistent with the existing literature on writing challenges among students in higher education settings (Kellogg, 1996; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Graham & Perin, 2007). They validate previous research that has emphasized the cognitive aspects of writing and the difficulties students often encounter in organizing their thoughts, retrieving relevant information, and employing effective language strategies.

The challenges related to referencing and citation underscore the significance of academic conventions and integrity in scholarly writing. The findings align with previous studies that have highlighted the importance of teaching proper citation practices and providing guidance on academic integrity (Pecorari, 2013; Howard, 1995). These challenges indicate the need for explicit instruction and support in mastering referencing conventions.

The interpretation of the results also reflects the socio-cognitive theory of writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Cognitive processes such as idea generation, knowledge organization, and language proficiency influence the identified challenges. The social aspect is evident in the influence of academic conventions, feedback, and support in the writing process.

The results in relation to the research objectives and existing literature highlight the significance of addressing these writing challenges among higher education students. The findings provide empirical evidence that can inform the development of targeted interventions and instructional strategies to enhance student's writing skills. They emphasize the importance of considering both cognitive and social factors in designing effective writing instruction and support systems. By aligning with existing literature and theoretical frameworks, the results contribute to the broader understanding of composition writing challenges and can guide future research and pedagogical practices in the field of writing education.

4.5 Comparison of the Findings with those of Previous Studies

Findings from this study and earlier studies are contrasted to show similarities and differences in the writing difficulties experienced by college students. Challenges including idea creation, transitions, word choice, and reference are comparable across varied educational settings, underscoring their universality and highlighting their significance in writing teaching. The challenges with referring and citation are consistent with other research, highlighting the value of academic integrity and traditions. The environment of Oman's higher education system is unique and is impacted by cultural and educational aspects, which leads to variances. These variances highlight the need to take into account particular settings when addressing writing issues and demand more research that is customized to different locations and institutions in order to successfully guide targeted treatments and instructional approaches.

4.6 New Insights or Theories Arising from the Study

The research emphasizes the importance of contextual elements in affecting students' writing issues, notably the distinctive cultural and educational background in Oman. It implies the presence of culturally distinctive barriers, which may be related to linguistic ability, cultural norms, or regional educational systems. The socio-cognitive theory of writing, which emphasizes the interaction between cognitive processes and social elements including feedback, cultural norms, and academic expectations, is in line with this.

The results emphasize the necessity for specialized training and assistance programs to deal with these particular writing difficulties. This contains clear guidance on how to reference, cite, utilize language, and revise. These observations aid in a better comprehension of the writing difficulties encountered in Oman's higher education system and provide insightful advice for future study and teaching methods. Given the significance of contextual and socio-cognitive elements, this study may help develop treatments and theories that are more successful in enhancing students' writing abilities across a range of educational contexts.

5. Conclusion

This study has revealed key challenges in composition writing for students, including issues with idea generation, transitions, word choice, grammar, referencing, and spelling. These findings are consistent with existing research and align with the socio-cognitive theory of writing,

underscoring the interconnectedness of cognitive processes and social factors in writing. To enhance educational practices in Oman, the study highlights the importance of targeted instruction, language assistance, and writing workshops to effectively address these challenges. Fostering a culture of feedback, revision, and academic integrity is crucial for nurturing writing skills development. Despite its value, it is essential to recognize limitations in sample size, research design, and contextual factors specific to Oman when interpreting and applying these findings to other contexts. This investigation serves as a foundational resource for future research and evidence-based strategies to enhance composition-writing instruction, ultimately better supporting Omani students in developing essential writing skills for academic and professional success.

6. Implications for Educational Practices in Oman

The research highlights the need to explicitly teach and support writing within the curriculum, highlighting the significance of writing-specific courses that address issues with grammar, vocabulary, spelling, idea creation, transitions, and revision. Writing and language teaching should be combined for total competency. It is important to use instructional tactics including brainstorming exercises, peer feedback sessions, and revision workshops to successfully address these problems. Promoting academic integrity via appropriate reference and citation techniques is also essential. Setting up assistance programs like writing centers or academic support programs may provide students with invaluable direction and tools to mitigate their writing issues.

7. Recommendations

There are a number of intriguing directions for future study in Oman's higher education writing skills subject. Longitudinal studies may chart the course of these abilities' development and pinpoint crucial intervention points. Comparative studies with foreign peers may highlight cultural variations and elements that are unique to a particular culture that affects writing difficulties. It is vital to assess the efficacy and long-term effects of focused therapies. An emerging field is the study of how technology, such as online platforms and automated feedback systems, might improve writing abilities. Understanding metacognitive techniques like self-awareness and introspection might help you find solutions to writing problems. The efficiency of professional development programs must also be evaluated, as well as the training requirements for writing teachers, in order to improve the standard of writing education. The whole educational experience may be improved by using qualitative research to better understand students' experiences with and views of writing obstacles.

8. Limitations

Despite being varied in terms of academic degrees, the relatively small sample size of 108 individuals raises questions regarding generalizability, emphasizing the advantage of a bigger sample for improved external validity. Although informative, the mixed-methods technique, which combines surveys and interviews, may be affected by subjectivity and social desirability bias. Because of the study's context-specific nature and the distinctive cultural and pedagogical characteristics of Oman's higher education system, it is important to interpret results carefully when using them in other situations. The research may not accurately reflect the complete range of students' writing experiences due to its narrow emphasis on writing obstacles and its restriction to a single university. Finally yet importantly, the cross-sectional methodology, which provides a moment in time, emphasizes the potential importance of future longitudinal studies to comprehend the progression of students' writing abilities.

9. Recommendations

Table 5. Research Question 5. Based on the findings of the study, what strategies or interventions can be recommended to mitigate the composition writing challenges encountered by higher education students in Oman?

Recommendations	Actions
1. Integrate explicit writing instruction - Prioritize skills such as idea generation, organization, transitions, grammar, and sentence structure.	- Include dedicated writing courses or modules in the curriculum.
2. Bolster language instruction - Focus on improving vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and sentence construction.	- Offer language courses or workshops.
3. Establish writing centers - Tailor support services to address specific writing challenges. - Provide guidance on effective revision strategies.	- Create hubs for workshops, consultations, and resources.
4. Incorporate technology-enhanced tools - Encourage independent self-editing and revision.	- Provide access to digital platforms with automated feedback.
5. Emphasize feedback and revision - Promote a growth mindset towards writing as a dynamic process.	- Encourage peer, instructor, and self-feedback on assignments.

Recommendations	Actions
6. Provide explicit instruction on referencing - Clarify rules and expectations for different citation styles.	- Educate students on proper source citation within their writing.
7. Foster interdisciplinary collaboration - Develop discipline-specific writing skills alongside general writing competencies.	- Integrate writing assignments into subject-specific courses.
8. Offer professional development for instructors - Support instructors in catering to diverse learners within the writing process.	- Enhance instructors' knowledge, pedagogical practices, and assessment techniques in teaching writing.
Recommendations	Actions
9. Cultivate a culture of writing - Encourage participation in writing-related events and competitions. - Showcase exemplary student writing and provide recognition.	- Promote a campus-wide culture that values and celebrates writing.
10. Support research into writing - Foster collaborations between faculty and researchers in the field of writing studies.	- Allocate resources and funding for research on writing challenges and pedagogical strategies.
11. Establish writing assessment standards - Implement regular assessments to track students' writing progress.	- Develop clear and consistent criteria for evaluating writing proficiency.
12. Engage students in writing communities - Encourage involvement in writing-related extracurricular activities.	- Create writing clubs, peer support groups, or online forums for students to share their work, provide feedback, and collaborate.
13. Develop writing resources and guides - Offer workshops on various aspects of writing, from research techniques to editing skills.	- Provide students with accessible writing resources, style guides, and templates.
14. Promote inclusive writing practices - Encourage inclusive language use and respect for different voices and backgrounds.	- Sensitize students to diverse perspectives and cultures in their writing.
15. Implement a writing improvement feedback loop - Use this feedback to refine and adapt writing programs and resources.	- Regularly assess the effectiveness of writing instruction and support services through feedback from students and instructors.

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Authors' contributions

Both authors contributed equally in this study. Saada conceptualized the research problem, collected primary data, and helped in analyzing them while Don was in-charge of interpreting, synthesizing and physical writing of the manuscript.

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Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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