The Academic Writing Challenges Faced by Saudi Students Studying in New Zealand

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgement), not material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Ayman Ankawi

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Ethics approval

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Abstract

This study investigated the academic writing challenges facing Saudi Arabian students when they enrol on mainstream programmes at one New Zealand university. This research adopted a qualitative method approach. Approximately 65 Saudi Arabian students were involved. A survey was used to collect students' demographic information while semi-structured interviews with 10 volunteer students were conducted to get their views and reflections on their English academic writing skills and what could be done to better prepare them for academic study at English medium universities. This identified that KSA Students' attitude towards learning and using English was not positive; this is due to issues in teaching of English that result with students are ill-prepared for the demands of study through the medium of English.

Students' attitude towards the language was not positive and this exacerbates the situation. This study focuses particularly on the demands of academic writing, it is explore students perceptions and suggests ways by which their needs could be better met. It is also hoped that the findings and recommendations from this study will benefit the Saudi students, the relevant government departments in Saudi Arabia as well as the English medium universities that recruit these students.

Chapter One

1.0   Introduction

The aim of this study is to identify the challenges of academic writing facing Saudi Arabian students at one New Zealand university. A review of the literature failed to find any research that specifically addresses the situation of Saudi students in New Zealand. As a Saudi student my experience was similar to other Saudi students entering English medium learning institutions. The experience involved the negotiation of a myriad of cultural and linguistic differences and a re-evaluation of my own perception of my ability with English. When I first travelled to the USA in 2001, despite strong speaking and listening skills, I was placed in a beginner level programme. This was a result of my performance in the written test, and this placement at beginner level had an effect on my confidence with English. My previous learning experience in Saudi Arabia had led me to believe that I was more proficient in English than the assessment of the USA university reflected. Although this dissertation is restricted to the experience of Saudi students, it is, of course, merely one aspect of a broad global picture reflecting the challenges facing second language speakers of English at Western universities.

As a lingua franca, English has gained increasing importance for second language students to improve their communication skills. This importance has led to a natural increase in students from non-English speaking nations who cross international borders attempting to gain an education in the West (Turner, 2011). In New Zealand, a report from the Ministry of Education indicates that the number of international

fee-paying students in tertiary education increased from 3,945 in 1994 to 11,498 in 2000 and to 23,065 in 2014 (MoE, 2014). While such reports provide us with figures, they do not provide insight into how international students adapt to their new experience of studying overseas. How do students crossing international borders negotiate the requirements of living in a host country and adapt to new educational systems, social relationships, and academic literacy practices? Socialization into academic discourses requires international students to be "... positioned between different cultures and languages" (Turner, 2011, p. 12). Saudi students clearly occupy this position of difference, and to gain insight into this position it is important to take note of their perceptions of studying English at an institution of higher education in the English medium.

Higher education institutions all over the western world receive a large number of international students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Hyland, 2009; Lea & Street, 2006; Paltridge, 2002; Turner, 2011). Students who have come from a tradition of learning via memorizing are met with new models that require critical thinking, and these students are often at a disadvantage in the western classroom (Borland & Pearce, 2002; Lea & Stierer, 2000; Paltridge, 2002). The main objective of this study is to examine factors that contribute to the academic writing challenges of Saudi students at one university in New Zealand.

1.1 Aim of the study

The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by Saudi Arabian students in relation to academic writing?

2. What are the factors that contribute to the academic writing challenges among the Saudi Arabian students?

3. How can Saudi Arabian students be helped with the academic writing challenges they face?

A review of the literature has not found any studies that specifically address the situation for Saudi students in New Zealand.

The study aims to investigate findings to understand Saudi students' perceptions of academic writing challenges. It is hoped that this understanding will also benefit the relevant institutions in Saudi Arabia and the English-medium universities who recruit these students.

1.2 Outline of the study

Chapter 2 is dedicated to a review of the literature. In this chapter the challenges in English academic writing will be discussed as well as the particular challenges facing Saudi students who are studying at Western universities. Chapter 3 describes the methodology employed, which involved surveys and interviews with Saudi Arabian students. The survey of 65 students was followed by interviews with 10

participants from the survey cohort. The study used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions involving these 10 volunteers. Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the investigation. The final chapter discusses the implications of these findings.

Chapter Two

2.0   Introduction

This chapter discusses some of the challenges facing international English as a Second Language (ESL) students who are studying at English-medium universities.

2.1   International students

Globally, the importance of learning English has led to a natural increase in students from non-English speaking nations crossing international borders to study in native English-speaking countries (Turner, 2011). As the number of international students learning at English-medium universities has increased and international education has become more globalized, the number of academic and social difficulties and problems encountered by non-native English speakers has become more extensive and intensive around the world (Hyland, 2008; Turner, 2011). Lack of confidence in English can affect students' results, because they cannot communicate well with their classmates and have difficulty in understanding the lectures, as well facing problems in writing and completing their assignments (Goodfellow, 2004).

Social relations and language skills are identified as key issues for international students adjusting to living and studying in an English-speaking environment (Andrade, 2006). Studies have shown language skills and social relations as prime factors for international students in adjusting to the new demographics and the country host (Culture, n.d.; Myles & Cheng, 2003). Rosenthal et al. (2007) stress the importance of these two issues for affecting international students' academic success. These factors have a direct impact upon the level of academic satisfaction amongst international students. Lalasz, Doane, Springer, and Dahir (2014) demonstrated that those international students lacking proficiency in English not only struggled with their academic satisfaction, but were also stressed, because they would not engage with or ask the lecturer questions in order to avoid making mistakes. Being successful in English is not only important on academic grounds, but also in developing a social circle that can help and support them during challenging times.

In another study, Sawir (2005) suggests that Asian students in Australia also experience difficulties in writing and speaking English which hinders them from active participation in the classroom and tutorials. Research (Hui, 2005; Xiao & Tianjin, 2006) attributes this issue to Asian students' prior experience of a more passive style of learning than that experienced in Australian classrooms. Hellstén and Prescott (2004) suggest that participating in classroom discussions by Asian students is hindered greatly by the negative feeling carried by those students when speaking English due to their lack of confidence.

Other researchers (Talebloo & Bak, 2013) emphasize the social and academic problems facing international students in English-speaking universities, and relate

this to their English skills. Sawir (2005) suggests that investigations must be conducted to uncover the influence of prior learning experiences of students and their beliefs about learning, as well as their education history and ways of learning English in institutions in students' countries of origin.

The next section examines the situation of international students in New Zealand.

2.1.1 International students in New Zealand

In New Zealand, recruiting students from outside of the country has become an important part of the New Zealand Government Education policy (MoE, 2014). International students contribute nearly $2.6 billion to the economy each year, hence, making the country's education sector the fifth largest export earner (MoE, 2014). In 2012/13, international students represented 42% of skilled principal migrants. Hence, the importance of international students in New Zealand cannot be ignored.

International students studying in NZ face a number of challenges (MoE, 2014). Some of these challenges and obstacles are language barriers (due to the majority of English-speaking students arriving from China, India, the Middle East and other countries where English is not widely spoken), cultural differences, geographical and climatic differences and lifestyle differences.

Because English is not their first language, international students experience difficulties and problems such as the lack of the appropriate English words for asking their lecturers questions, understanding the writing conventions of Western

universities in general, and those of the New Zealand academy in particular. In addition they need to understand the learning resources available in the host community and in the academic environment such as the Student Learning Centre at each university where help is available by appointment and free of charge. Poor performance in the academic environment leads to problems such as the lack of confidence in their ability to communicate effectively with an English-speaking audience. Furthermore, academic writing involves critical thinking and a high level of English, which is a big issue for many international students arriving in New Zealand, including Saudi students.

2.1.2 Saudi students

Arab learners, in particular students from Saudi Arabia, have few opportunities to speak, read, write or listen to English in their home countries. Saudi Arabia has more recently opened its doors to foreign business in an effort to integrate itself into the global economy (Qobo & Soko, 2010). Adult professionals are looking to learn English in order to exploit the advantage English provides in the commercial world. However, the Saudi curriculum is based mainly on the Arabic language throughout all the educational phases for students (Saadi, 2012). Therefore, Saudis focus only on their native language and little attention is paid to English or other languages. At work they might speak only Arabic and they have few opportunities to speak English with foreigner workers or visitors. Some of the difficulties Arab students face during their process of learning to speak in English is this lack of opportunity to communicate in English and engage with fluent English speakers (Saadi, 2012).

Fadda (2012) indicates that poor communication skills are another major challenge that might affect Arab students. This would apply to the Saudi students who conduct their studies in New Zealand. Because of these poor communication skills, they often lack confidence in pursuing their overseas studies. This lack of confidence is thought to be even more dominant among Arabic-speaking than other students, as a result of their poor English-speaking and comprehension skills, and is considered as an obstacle in their active participation in classroom' discussion (Sayidina, 2010).

However, Saudi students' difficulties in speaking English are a minor problem compared to the difficulties they encounter with academic discourse. Writing or reading in a language other than Arabic is not widely taught in the Saudi educational system (Elmoneif, 2005).

Arab students prefer to listen and talk rather than read and write. This might be useful for getting to know their classmates or for discussing academic readings or assignments, but it is not enough to help them successfully write assignments or pass their degrees. To do this, they must be good at doing academic writing (Gelb, 2012).

I will look at problems that all international students may have with academic writing, and then at problems facing Saudi students in particular.

2.2   Academic English

According to Fukao and Fujii (2001) academic writing requires students to have the ability to integrate skills which include gathering information, paraphrasing and summarizing resources, organizing ideas in a logical order, editing and finally

proofreading. International students must be grounded in a good understanding of the research material being read, and be able to paraphrase and effectively utilise research material as support for their argument. Moreover, international students are required to employ appropriate vocabulary, a suitable style and effective organisational skills in their academic writing. Adas and Bakir (2013) focused on the lack of understanding of English vocabulary for international students learning English as second language, and how international students face problems expressing their ideas effectively when they are writing in an academic way. They argued that one of the reasons for this was that the students do not practise their skills. It is clear that the social and cultural background of any international student is reflected in their academic writing, for example, the context of the topic is greatly influenced by the cultural background and social conditions of the writer (Wang, 2011). Understanding writing skills in their first language (L1) accordingly should assist students to transfer some of the writing skills such as outlining, paraphrasing and summarising to their second language (L2) more easily.

Academic writing deals with structure, tone, referencing and assumes that students are able to write accurately (Hyland, 2009; Turner, 2011; Yingli, 2012; Zamel, 1982). According to Hyland (2008) there is no doubt that both domestic and international students encounter many problems in academic writing. Because of this, writing essays and submitting academic work has become a critical issue that is receiving growing attention in the academic environment (Hyland, 2004; Lea & Street, 2006). Alongside the expectation of learning and understanding the content of the subject being taught, students also need to practise the skill of developing and

revising ideas. The end goal is the delivery of ideas to a reader in a way that is both readable and recognizable as a piece of academic writing (Turner, 2011).

There are various strands of academic writing according to the many ways that academic writing is defined. An example of this is the definition put forth by Tas (2010) who believes that academic discourse is a particular kind of written world, with a set of conventions, or 'code,' of its own. Students may feel that they cannot write in this specialized code due a lack of knowledge and understanding of that code. Tardy (2005, p. 325) defines academic writing as "transformation of knowledge", which includes convincing readers of the value, significance and credibility of the student's work. Hyland and Tse (2005, p. 1092) describe academic writing as "an act of identity" since it represents and reflects the internal image of the writer.

Irvin (2010, p. 8) described academic writing as a form of "evaluation that requires students to demonstrate knowledge and show proficiency with certain disciplinary skills of thinking, interpreting, and presenting". For students to be competent in academic writing, they must pay close attention to, and have an awareness of, expectations set out by lecturers/teachers in order to produce writing of the required standard (Irvin, 2010).

Turner (2011) also mentions that good academic writing must be clear and concise. She notes that " tightly ordered logical exposition, concision in choice of lexis, clarity and economy of style continue to be the rhetorical norms within which academic writing pedagogy and expectations of a smooth read, operate " (p. 78).

Scarcella (2003) argues that academic writing has specific linguistic features related to academic disciplines. He adds that academic literacy today is not only the ability to read and write, but also involves the ability to acquire many types of skills such as higher order thinking skills (critical thinking), communication skills and research skills.

While universities provide guidelines for academic writing, the question is how these guidelines are used and understood by the broad range of students who need to apply these rules in academic writing. The act of reading such a guide is, in itself, a task for many second language students. This is just one of the problems that international students, such as Saudi students, face.

2.2.1 Difficulties Saudi students have with academic English

Students in Saudi Arabia are only exposed to English for few hours per week during formal classroom instruction. This instruction focuses on writing rather than speaking or listening English in school, Saudi students hear little spoken English (Al-Seghayer, 2014). This causes difficulties when they need to discuss issues with their classmates or ask questions of their lecturers at English medium institutions. According to Grami and Alzughaibi (2012) statistics indicate that Saudi students perform extremely poorly in English in Saudi Arabia. This therefore affects their performance in other subjects taught in English and the challenge will be greater for those who are studying at an English-medium university in an overseas country such as New Zealand.

Saudi students do not take advantage of the opportunity to read in English from online resources (Aljumah, 2012). Although a number of official websites have the option to switch to English, all of them first show the Arabic version.

Those students who are not well equipped with good writing skills in general are likely to find academic writing even more difficult (Sayidina, 2010). Academic writing requires that the students write from a formal perspective while applying all the rules relevant to the writing and use the correct style of citation when providing evidence for claims. Bacha (2010) argues that cultural differences cause serious problems in the way in which thought is expressed in writing, particularly in academic writing.

Furthermore, the lack of confidence in academic writing does not only lead to poor quality work, but it can also result in the student's failure to engage in classroom discussions (Qobo & Soko, 2010).

In order to be able to effectively learn and implement academic writing in New Zealand universities, Saudi students need to be able to understand English, both spoken and written. In situations where students have poor listening comprehension skills, they fail to understand lectures, ask questions or discuss ideas amongst classmates. All these issues emerge because they are not well prepared before they arrive so they do not participate as they fear suffering embarrassment in front of their peers while speaking English. Improving their listening and speaking about academic issues will improve their confidence about writing academically.

Reading academic texts is also a challenge for Saudi students. With regard to rhetorical style issues, according to Grabe and Kaplan (2014) rhetorical styles of

writing differ from one language to another due to the differences between cultures. For this reason people always prefer to read and write texts which are constructed in a rhetorical style associated with their culture. Kaplan (1972) argues that expository writing in a second language is challenging.

If texts are written in a rhetorical style different from the style that is used in their own language, readers become confused and find their language unusual even if the grammar and vocabulary are correct (Siti Hamin & Mohammad, 2012). Gomaa-Moulds (2010) emphasizes that academic writing is the most difficult skill for English learners. She also agrees that the students' first language affects their target language.

2.3   Other difficulties Saudi students have

Besides English academic writing and speaking being considered a great challenge and problem to Saudi students, there are a number of other language-related problems and I will look at some of these next.

2.3.1   Difficulties with grammatical competence

Grammatical difficulties such as those are noted in their spoken language may become permanent if not overcome prior to progressing to studying in the English medium, these difficulties may prevail in their academic writing as a result. Arabic belongs to the Semitic language family and the grammar and rules are very different to English (Sayidina, 2010). Furthermore, all words in Arabic follow the pattern of

being compiled using at least three consonants along with vowels and in some cases an affix.

An example that affects Saudi students is the difference in the use of vowels. While vowels are visible in English writing (English writing has more vowels than Arabic), they are considered unimportant in Arabic and are not apparent in Arabic writing. This makes it difficult for students to apply rules in English that they do not have in their own language. As a result of their non-dependence on the writing of vowels explicitly, Saudi learners tend to forget to include these vowels when writing in English. Researchers name this tendency "vowel blindness" (Khan, 2013, p. 26). Some Saudi students who are studying in English be aware of other differences between Arabic and English. Saudi students instead sometimes jump to hasty conclusions about grammar rules (Bacha, 2010)

2.3.2 Difficulties with the different structure of Arabic and English

Many languages, including Arabic, differ from English in style. Arabic and English are different, in that Arabic tends to have more metaphoric phrases and lengthier sentences as compared to English (Fadda, 2012). This in turn appears in the students' academic writing when they try to clarify their points and ideas.

Apart from learning a completely new alphabet and set of grammatical rules, as well as characteristics of the new language such as verbs, nouns, vowels and prepositions, Saudi Arabian students must learn to write in the reverse direction compared to Arabic, which is written from right to left.

Moreover, differences in writing and reading of Arabic and English also tend to be challenging. Yiu (2009) explained that students whose mother language has more different structures than English tend to have difficulties in trying to study their university subject in English. This means that some international students including Saudis who are not fluent in English face difficulties in understanding the topics being studied at the English-medium universities as well as the expected structure of academic essays.

2.3.3   Difficulties with difference in genres

Peters (2008, p. 3) has defined genres "as inherently dynamic rhetorical structures that can be manipulated according to the conditions of use". Differences in genre are one reason to explain why writing in English is so difficult for speakers of other languages including Saudi students. According to Hyland (2008) analysing language acquisition through a genre point of view assists us in understanding the organizational patterns of assignments. While all possibilities are available to all users, what is seen as logical, engaging, and relevant or well-organized in academic writing often differs across cultures (Hyland & Tse, 2005). However, it is clear that there are different ways of organizing ideas and structuring arguments in different languages, which can have implications for teachers of academic writing (Bacha, 2010). Researchers suggest, for instance, that compared with many languages, academic texts in English tend to be more explicit about structure and purposes, "to be less tolerant of digressions, to be more cautious in making claims, and to use more sentence connectors" (Hyland & Tse, 2005, p. 548). Differences such as these are

important for teachers in Saudi Arabia to point out and teach before Arab students leave to study in English-medium universities.

2.3.4   Socio-cultural differences

For students who travel overseas to study, being by themselves without their families often becomes a major challenge on its own and can have severe effects on their ability to learn and be open to new ideas and perspectives (Gee, 2005).

The new study environment is completely different from Saudi students' native environment. The university curriculum may address subjects and issues that are not related to the student's interests and seem to be far from the reality of his or her home country (Sayidina, 2010). Leki and Carson (1997) report that international students bring a range of cultural and experiential differences to the task of academic writing. A study conducted by Al-Khairy (2013, p. 366) lists the common factors perceived as demotivating by Saudi students and hence impacting negatively perception of learning English. These factors are :

1.   Poor teaching methodologies in Saudi Arabia

2.   Inadequate teaching curricula in Saudi Arabia

3.   Insufficient exposure to English in Saudi Arabia

4.   Lack of motivation in Saudi Arabia

5.   Lack of information in Saudi Arabia about the educational institutes at which students will study.

Students who are brought up in Saudi Arabia have a limited exposure to English which will affect their motivation to improve their English skills. In addition Intakhabalam (2011, p. 1256) states that lack of communication with native English speakers, lack of guidance to help them in English, lifestyle, and family pressure to study abroad are also the major reasons resulting in poor understanding of English at all levels. Recently however Saudis have gained a wider understanding and acceptance of the important of English. It is seen as essential to eliminating communication barriers with foreigners, and for the social, scientific and economic development of the country (Javid, Farooq, & Gulzar, 2012). However, Saudi students who study overseas in countries such as New Zealand often does because they have been ordered by their parents, tend to lack passion for their studies.

2.4   The Saudi education system

The educational system in Saudi Arabia is vastly different from other countries. All public and private schools are gender-segregated for the learner and the teacher (Al-Zarah, 2008). There are no co-educational institutions, it is a single-sex school system, according to the beliefs of the Islam and also associated with cultural, social, and traditional values (Wiseman, 2010). Despite the single-sex educational system, both sexes receive the same quality of educational facilities (Al-Johani, 2009). Some higher education universities in Saudi Arabia teach some scientific subjects like medicine and engineering in English, because the textbooks are in English. However, Arabic is used in non-scientific courses (e.g., humanities courses) where the textbooks are mainly in Arabic (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).

After completing the elementary level, students at the age of fourteen are encouraged to carry on their education at the intermediate level, which is equivalent to Years 6-8 in the New Zealand education system. At this stage, English as a foreign language becomes a compulsory subject throughout the remainder of school (Sayidina, 2010). It is not a surprise that the government mandated teaching English in 2003 in schools from grade 6 onwards in order for Saudis to acquire basic English skills to eliminate communication barriers with other nations and increase the possibility of cooperation (Al Zayid, 2012; Ur Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013).

Although the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia recommends that learning English must be implemented at grade 6, some consider this too late (Sayidina, 2010). The fact that English is now the main language used worldwide means that students should be taught the language from as early as kindergarten. Unfortunately, even though Arabic students start learning English earlier, most schools do not take it seriously and end up concentrating on Arabic since it is the national language. Therefore, a weak foundation in English tends to be a major challenge when it comes to doing academic writing for Saudi students (Grami & Alzughaibi, 2012).

2.4.1 English teachers in Saudi Arabia

Teachers of English in Saudi Arabia are likely to come from other Muslim countries, rather than English-speaking countries (Al-Seghayer, 2014). Most of the foreign teachers teaching in Saudi Arabia are not themselves native English speakers. They are from Pakistan, India, Malaysia and various Muslim countries surrounding Saudi Arabia such as Jordan, Syria, Egypt (Bacha, 2010). Due to their lack of English

skills, most of the teachers in Saudi Arabia can only provide limited knowledge of the language to the students (Al-Hazmi, 2003). This is either because they themselves are alumni of the same educational system, hence they lack English proficiency, or the curriculum provided to them is limited. Poor teaching from teachers will negatively affect students learning, therefore the vocabulary of students will be affected. Because the teacher is the only source of English help at the educational institute, it is reasonable for the students to rely solely on the teacher. If the teachers are not confident about their own English, they are likely to avoid discussions in class and focus instead on grammar (Saadi, 2012). Such outdated methods learning do not encourage students to actively participate in class discussions or search the Internet looking for books or articles themselves and consequently does not prepare students for the demands of academic writing (Yiu, 2009). Teachers explain everything in the text as well as grammatical rules while the students listen passively, take notes and answer questions in Arabic. This disadvantages Saudi students when they study in English-speaking countries like New Zealand where students are expected to understand lectures and take a more active role in questions and discussions.

As noted, Saudi students might lack a broad foundation in English as many teachers in Saudi Arabia only concentrate on grammar teaching. In addition, Bacha (2012) highlights the fact that Arabic is taught by memorising the Holy Quran and classical poetry. In this context, methods such as memorising and rote learning are a mirror of the reading-writing practices utilised by the Arab countries (Sayidina, 2010). In addition, according to Alhaisoni (2012) most students in Saudi Arabia are not able to utilise English once they travel overseas to study. This is simply because many

teachers are focused on teaching the basics of grammar and not focused on spoken communication skills. Teachers in the region tend to emphasise vocabulary but do not focus on developing academic writing skills. Most teachers in Saudi Arabia do not appear able to increase students' writing proficiency.

There are a number of reasons that mean that Saudi Arabia may not always be the preferred destination for fluent English-speaking instructors. Limitations such as having a formal dress code like "abaya", and prohibition of alcohol and pork as well as rules against gender mixing are just some of the issues that might deter native English-speaking teachers from travelling to and working in Saudi Arabia. Also, teachers are aware that they might find themselves teaching in remote locations.

2.4.2   The method of teaching English in Saudi Arabia

Zafer (2002) surveyed intermediate and secondary English teachers from the Qassim region in Saudi Arabia about the teaching methods they used. He found that the methods most preferred and used by teachers are the Audio Lingual Method followed by the Grammar Translation Method. According to Fareh (2010), English teachers talk through the majority of the lesson and students rarely speak or ask questions, also Alkubaidi (2014) adds that classes are usually quiet since the students take a passive part in the learning process. Alhaisoni (2012) points out that compared with many countries where English is taught as a second or foreign language, the methodology used by Saudi Arabian teachers is not adequate for learning English, in particular learning academic writing. Writing strategies that support good academic writing are not taught in the Saudi curriculum.

The persistent use of traditional approaches for teaching English in Saudi Arabia is partly attributed to the fact that texts and curricula are locally developed and the students are not familiar with the attributes of English (Fadda, 2012). In many parts of the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, English is taught through traditional teacher-centred, book-centred, grammar translation methods and a strong emphasis is put on rote learning (Bacha, 2010). As a result of this traditional approach, students think knowledge is something to be taught explicitly and transmitted by their teachers rather than something to be explored and interpreted by themselves. In addition, many students prefer to listen rather than to actively participate in the learning process. Furthermore, the outdated style of teaching in Saudi Arabia leads to limitations of material and syllabus design, limitations of topics for discussion and restrictions on using a wide variety of online resources for most Arab students (Fadda, 2012).

2.5   Lack of confidence for learning English

As noted above, because many English teachers in Saudi Arabia are not native speakers of English, it is possible that the teachers themselves may lack confidence in teaching speaking or writing. Not surprisingly, Saudi Arabian students also show low levels of confidence towards learning English (Fadda, 2012), possibly because their teachers also lack confidence. Research indicates that a lack of confidence affects the ability of students to learn English (Fadda, 2012; Qobo & Soko, 2010; Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000). Yiu (2009) considers that factors like low

confidence lead to lack of motivation to learn English, further resulting in the inability to learn and understand English properly. Previous studies and research have shown that students' lack of motivation is a result of external factors like the learning environment and teacher's methodology but also of internal factors like self-confidence and negative attitude and perception of or attitude towards the English (Simone, 2012). Because students do not learn English well, they are not confident about using it. To learn more effectively, there is a need for better teaching and more exposure to English which would encourage high levels of confidence as this assists students to cope with the difficulties of the language. The lack of confidence amongst Saudi students, which may partially be due to their lack of preparation in their home country, may be made worse by the challenges in academic writing, particularly for those who are studying English as a second language. As well as lacking confidence, Saudi students may also lack motivation.

2.5.1   Lack of motivation for learning English

Motivation refers to the attribute that moves us to do or not to do something (Broussard & Garrison, 2004). It is believed that motivation "energizes" human behaviour and "gives it direction", therefore it forms a significant dimension in language learning (Bahous, Bacha, & Nabhani, 2011, p. 34). A study of students in Hong Kong with different cultural backgrounds examined the issue of motivation and acquiring of the language (Wong, 2007). It demonstrated that the main driver for stimulating students to learn English and encouraging them to obtain good academic results is social recognition and acknowledgement.

In New Zealand, there is a tendency for most Saudi student communities to stay together instead of developing relationships with local students. This means that these students are less likely to enjoy the language learning benefits that could be gained from living with a home stay family or with New Zealand flatmates, as many prefer to share accommodation with other Arabic speakers instead. If they were more motivated to learn English, they would probably choose to live in a situation where they had to communicate in English most of the time.

Many Saudi students have a negative attitude as a result of lacking confidence and motivation towards the learning of English (Bahous et al., 2011). Also, many of them view English as unimportant for many reasons. English is not often used in the Saudi classroom. In addition, the main reason for Saudi students to learn English in Saudi Arabia (KSA) is simply to pass exams (Saadi, 2012).

Furthermore, the language of instruction used within schools and universities is Arabic. There are very few educational institutions other than the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, and Saudi Electronic University where English is the language of instruction. The majority of Saudi students might still have the same anti-English feeling carried with them to New Zealand where, as mentioned, most of them come and are involved in studying because of their parents' desire, rather than their own.

2.6   Conclusion

International students in general encounter many challenges with English. Saudi students in particular were found to have difficulties in studying in English- medium universities for several reasons, some of which are social, others are academic. Examples of the social factors that affect Saudi students include the decision to study in an English-medium university being the parents' instead of the students' desire and the tendency of Saudi students to live together instead of mingling with native English speakers. Their weak foundations in English as a foreign language and weak foundation in writing starting back in Saudi Arabia are examples of the academic factors.

The educational system in Saudi Arabia was found to implement traditional English teaching methods which have proved unproductive and need to be developed to keep pace with developed teaching systems worldwide. The educational system in Saudi Arabia also needs to integrate English teaching at a much earlier stage in schools. To improve their academic writing skills, students wanting to study in English-medium universities have to learn a series of conventions in style, referencing and organization. A transitional stage in Saudi Arabia where students wanting to learn English can be helped to overcome the difficulties mentioned earlier is needed.

Regarding the teaching of English in Saudi Arabia, schools do not allocate enough hours for learning English in primary and secondary schools (Al-Seghayer, 2014). In addition, academic writing requires the acquisition of complex and intensive language skills that include more complicated expressions, concepts, terms and texts. Saudi Arabia needs to incorporate more modern communication methods as

well as information about academic writing conventions that will enhance Saudi students' writing skills, and better prepare them for their graduate and post-graduate education in English-medium universities.

At present, Saudi Arabia is investing in human resources at an improved rate compared to before. More than 25% of the budget is now focused on education. There were 8 public universities in Saudi in 2006 and by 2009, this number had grown to 25, showing the increasing importance of higher education in Saudi Arabia (Education, 2015). The expansion of educational institutions has led to the growth of English as the medium of instruction. Most of the colleges and universities have a dedicated English department but it is not known whether the English departments have English-speaking teachers or teachers confident in speaking and writing English.

The next chapter will describe the methodology employed in this research project.

Chapter Three

3.0 Introduction

As mentioned, this study explores the challenge of academic writing among Saudi Arabian students in one New Zealand university. This chapter discusses the methodology employed to provide information about the research process that guided this study. The participants consisted of Saudi students enrolled during the academic year 2014-2015. The data was collected from the online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

3.1 Research methodology

This study used a largely qualitative research method, which aims to address the current understanding of the challenges that Saudi Arabian students face in English academic writing. This study was conducted using interviews and a questionnaire to collect data from participants. Interviews were mainly used to inform this study and answer the research questions while questionnaires were used to provide an overview and to gather demographic data. To analyse the questionnaires the study made use of descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics are useful to provide simple summaries about the sample and the measures (Trachim, 2006).Gephart (2004) classified qualitative research into three distinct philosophical categories which are positivism, interpretivism and critical postmodernism. Figure 1 shows the three qualitative research categories.

Figure 1: Classified qualitative research adaptive. (Gephart, 2004)
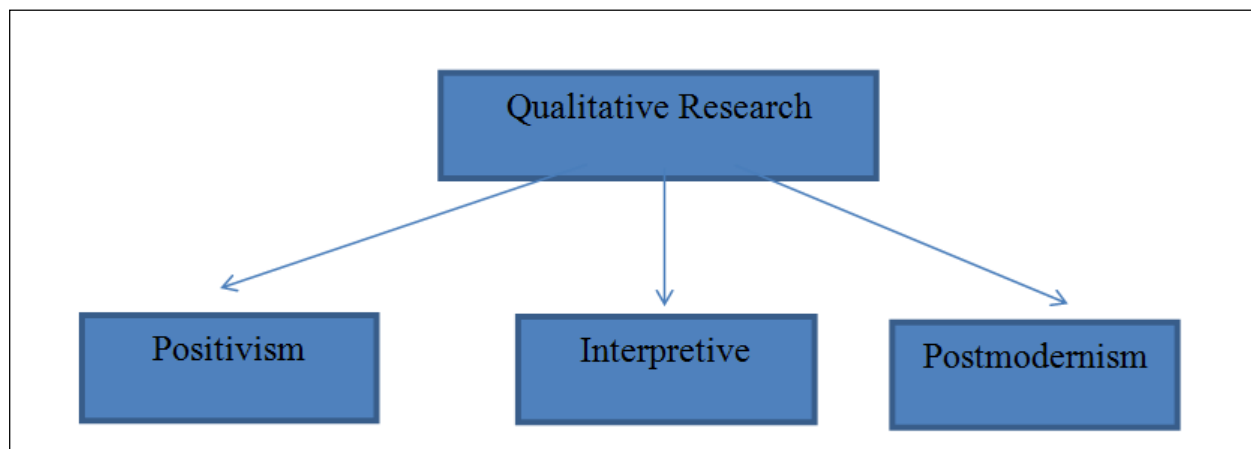
This study mainly adopts an interpretive approach, which fits the selection of interviews as the main method of data collection. According to researchers (Creswell, 2013; Green, Melbourne Australia RIMT University Press/2002; Merriam, 2009) the interpretive approach views realities as multiple constructions or interpretations rather than a single truth.

Patton (1990, p. 375) stated that "interpretation involves explaining the findings, answering 'why' questions, attaching significance to particular results and putting patterns into an analytical framework". The interpretive approach largely uses an inductive research approach and idiographic data collection (Berg & Lune, 2004). Idiographic data collection is a qualitative research approach which describes the intentions, perceptions and attitudes of participants in relation to the topic of concern (Berg & Lune, 2004; Glaser & Strauss, 2009). Based on descriptions and observations and utilization of the interpretive approach, the subject can enhance understanding of the human experiences, perceptions, intentions, motivations and behaviours of the study participants. Using the interpretive approach entails a

dialogue between the researcher and research participants to collaboratively come up with a fuller picture. This is important to understand the challenges of academic writing amongst Saudi Arabian students who have their own experiences with academic writing depending on their education, upbringing, and worldview. Interviewing participants was important for this study to obtain an accurate picture of these students' experience with academic writing.

3.1.1 Participants

The demographic survey for this study involved 65 students from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) who are studying at one New Zealand university.

The criteria for participation were the students must have been educated in Saudi Arabia, and they must currently be studying at the New Zealand university. Participants were approached in various ways to ensure a high response rate.

For example, the participants were contacted via the International Student's Office which provided a list of Saudi Arabian students at the university across all the faculties. The International Students Office identified 150 students from Saudi Arabia. This study sought the cooperation from the International Student's Office to send the invitation via email for these students asking for volunteers to participate in the research. The students who volunteered were contacted via email. To increase the response rate, this study used a snowballing technique, whereby potential participants were also asked to forward the invitation to their friends from Saudi Arabia, who are currently studying in the university.

Knight and Pearson (2005) argued that sharing information on social networking sites is useful. Therefore, another method in approaching potential participants for this study was to contact the Saudi Arabian student clubs and associations. There are many Saudi Social Clubs in New Zealand such as in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and cities in the South Island, and they have a Facebook page. The roles of these clubs are to look after Saudi students in New Zealand and provide them with social, and cultural services, and to be the first point of contact for all students. The clubs were created by the Saudi Arabian government to provide students with various support services such as educational and social support and give them an opportunity to participate in outdoor and indoor sports activities. The Saudi Students Social Club in Auckland agreed to post the link to the online questionnaire, which also provided information with regard to the interviews and the ways in which the participants could take part on its Facebook page (Saudi Auckland Club). This approach was taken because some students may have missed the invitation to participate in the research that was sent by the International Students Office to his or her official university email.

3.1.2   Researcher's role

I am an Arabic native speaker from Saudi Arabia. I come from the same culture as the participants and I am a postgraduate student. All of this put me on a relatively equal footing with the participants.

Therefore participants felt comfortable answering the survey questions and were able to express their feelings honestly with me throughout the interviews. Of great importance was the fact that the interviews were conducted in Arabic. This insured that participants were able to express their views freely.

3.2 Data collection instruments

3.2.1 Online survey

The online survey for this study consists of closed- and open-ended questions. This study used an online survey website called SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com), which provides a cloud service and it was chosen because it is customizable and widely known. Therefore, participants trusted the link when it was sent to them by email.

There were 16 multiple-choice questions and one open-ended question. Participants were asked about their demographic characteristics such as age, gender and duration of their English study before they were admitted to the New Zealand university, the program they are currently enrolled in, whether they intended to return to the KSA or continue studying in New Zealand upon program completion, the duration of time they studied English in KSA, and questions relating to their attitudes and insights about academic writing challenges. A copy of the questionnaire is provided (see Appendix B).

Participants were asked to provide answers related to their experience and their academic background. Self-administered questionnaires were used in this study because they were convenient for the research participants. In addition, the online survey had several advantages. This study used the web survey to distribute the questionnaires and gather data and information. According to Lalasz et al. (2014) online surveys are cost-effective especially when reaching out to a large number of participants, in addition online surveys offered flexibility as they can be completed anytime and anywhere. Participants for this study were students and their busy

schedules may have deterred them from participating in the survey so allowing them to complete the survey in their own time was important.

From the researcher's perspective the online survey was a very easy and efficient tool. Most online survey platforms also offer data tabulation and analysis services which facilitate the gathering and analysis of data.

Surveys can have some disadvantages such as respondents might not feel encouraged to provide accurate and honest answers, and respondents may feel uncomfortable in providing answers that present themselves in an unfavourable manner.

The questionnaire was presented in Arabic and English to ensure that the participants understood the questions. Translation of the questionnaires from English to Arabic was done by the researcher and the accuracy of the translation was reviewed by an Arabic PhD student also studying at the same university.

3.2.2 Interviews

The questionnaires gave a broad overview of the cohort, and interviews with volunteers helped me to broaden my understanding of the challenges these students face. Table 1 shows the demographic information for students who volunteered for the interviews.

Table 1: Interviewees

Participant	Age	Specialty	Gender	How long ago did you arrive in NZ
P1	25-30	IT	Male	more than 12 months
P2	18-24	Computer and mobile system engineering	Male	more than 12 months
P3	25-30	Business Administration	Male	more than 12 months
P4	25-30	Master of Computer and Information Sciences	Male	more than 12 months
P5	31-34	Computer sciences	Male	more than 12 months
P6	18-24	Health science	Male	more than 12 months
P7	31-34	Bachelor of Business	Male	more than 12 months
P8	18-24	Bachelor of Business - Design Major	Male	more than 12 months
P9	25-30	Finance	Male	more than 12 months
P10	25-30	Business Information System	Male	more than 12 months

Interviews are considered to be one of the most important tools for gathering primary data (Myers, 1997).

In this study the participants were all Saudi Arabian and studying at the undergraduate level except for one of the ten participants who was a postgraduate student. They were asked to volunteer, and the first 10 to do so were chosen for the interviews as they all had the characteristics and context needed.

This study used the semi-structured interviews. These interviews employ a guideline for questions asked but allow the researcher the freedom to follow up points as necessary within a given structure (Thomas, 2010). In other words, participants answer a few open-ended questions to give their views and opinions of the topic in question (Creswell, 2009).

In the semi-structured interviews, the interviewer can identify general information about the topic at hand but can also allow more specific information about the topic to emerge from the two-way conversation (Thomas, 2010). In this particular study, semi-structured interviews allowed me, as the researcher, to obtain participants' perceptions and opinions on the challenges of academic writing and also the reasons and stories behind these challenges.

There are a few advantages of using semi-structured interviews such as providing valuable information from the context of the participants' experiences and the fact that using a set of pre-determined questions helped provide some uniformity to the data (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 1990). The disadvantages of interviews include that it is a time- consuming method for collecting and analysing data, interviews have also some limitations such as the lack of attention for precise details of the research. In

addition to that, there is a possibility that the interviews process can be influenced by the biases of the interviewer.

As this study is relying on the interview for collecting data about academic writing, the characteristics and beliefs of the participants being interviewed were important to reveal their experiences and opinions about the challenges of academic writing.

As the researcher I asked a question to participants and from their answers, I formulated specific questions on the topic to explore the challenge of academic writing that the participants face and their experiences. For example, as the researcher I was interested to know what the tools and strategies were that the participants used to overcome the challenges of academic writing. Other questions during the interviews mainly asked participants about the role of the Student Learning Centre (SLC), the students' level of preparation for academic writing, and most importantly, the challenges they face in academic writing at university now. Interviews were planned to take between 45 minutes to an hour to allow for meaningful sharing of experiences that the students face with regards to academic writing. The interview questions for this study are provided (see Appendix C).

3.3   Data analysis

According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2010) data analyzing in a qualitative study is the difficult part and requires thinking and reasoning, rather than just being a technical process. Qualitative research requires the researcher to be flexible during

the analyzing. This study adopted an interpretive approach from Elliott and Timulak (2005), using the following steps.

1- Data preparation: The first step was to transcribe the interviews and enter this data into a document that makes it easy to follow and read. After transcribing and listening to the interviews several times I became more familiar with the data. One of the most important procedures that followed from Elliott and Timulak (2005) is to delete the information that does not constitute important and relevant aspects of the phenomenon. In this study all interviews were transcribed, after that I read each interview several times to make myself more familiar with it. The extra and unnecessary data were deleted.

2- Meaning units: In the second step the data was divided into distinctive meaning units. Delineating the meaning units can shorten them by getting rid of redundancies that do not change the meaning contained in them. This meant that the data collected in the transcribed interviews was divided into several meaning units based on the research objectives. This step helped me to understand participants' meaning and to prepare for the next step which involved organizing all meaning units.

3- Organizing structure: The third step was finding an overall organizing structure for the data, normally a different set of words is used to describe a different aspect of the phenomenon, and then organizing the phenomenon into different processes or phases. This research analysed the data that has been collected, then analysed and divided the meaning into several units, later on I organized and collected the data into generated themes.

4- Generating categories: The fourth step was to generate categories from the data. As an interpretive technique, the study used coding in order to organize the data and provide a means of introducing interpretations.

3.4 Summary

This chapter has explained the methodology of this study. It began with the theoretical aspects of the methodology used and discussed the features of the approach, which made it suitable for the study. Also, the chapter described my role as the researcher in this study. The study used a questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews, to collect the data. The techniques used for data analysis, which included coding, segmenting and interpretation have also been discussed in this chapter. The next chapter presents the findings of the study, which will be analysed according to relevant literature.

Chapter Four

4.0   Introduction

In this chapter, the findings of the survey will be reported, followed by the interview findings.

4.1   Findings of the student survey

In total 65 Saudi Arabian students who are studying at one university in New Zealand completed the survey. As discussed in Chapter Three, the survey was designed to collect participants' demographic information in addition to other information, which was used to frame questions for the interviews. A total of 58 male and 7 female participants were involved in the survey.

4.2   Participant's demographics

The Saudi participants' ages varied, as shown in Figure 2 below.
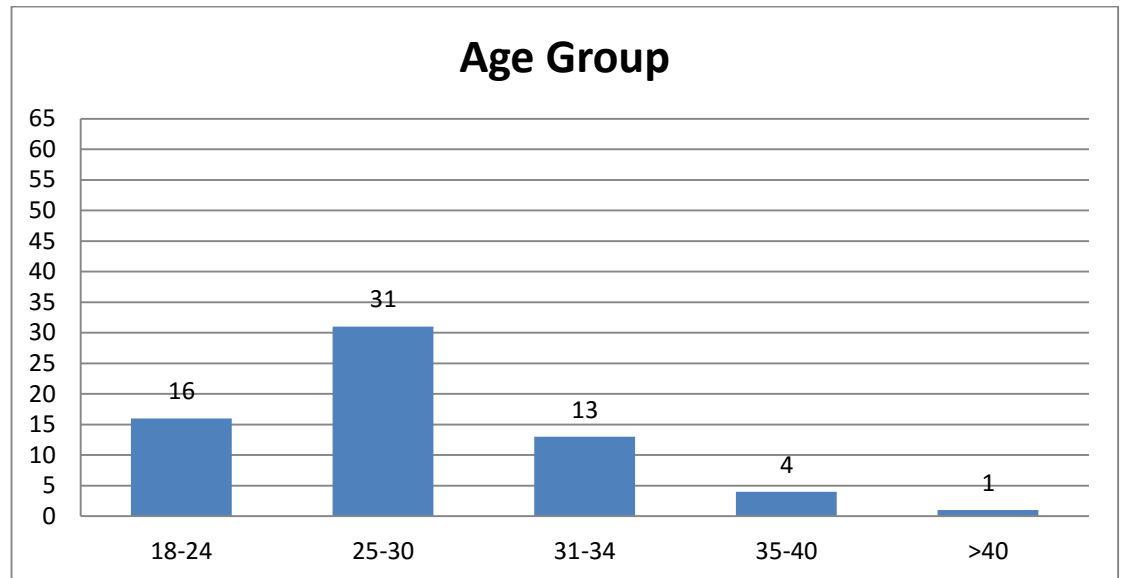
Figure 2: Participant's age

Figure 2 shows the ages of the participents who volunteered in this study, 31 of the participants ages ranged from 25-30 years, and they represent the majority of the participants, 16 participants were aged between 18-24 years, and 13 participants were in the age range between 31-34. In addition, 4 participants were between 35-40 years, and only one participant was more than 40 years old. Next I wanted to know how long the participants had been in New Zealand.

Figure 3: **Participants' length of time in New Zealand**

This figure above shows that 58 of the participants in this study had been in New Zealand for more than 12 months, while 4 participants and 3 participants of the targeted sample had been in New Zealand 2-6 months and 7-12 months respectively. Saudi students were studying a number of different subjects in New Zealand. However, the majority of them were studying Engineering (with different specializations), while others were studying business, marketing, computer science, accounting, IT, finance, health science, management and tourism. Five students in the survey were studying to obtain a masters' degree (postgraduate studies) while the rest were studying for bachelors' degrees (undergraduate studies). I also wanted to know their future plans.
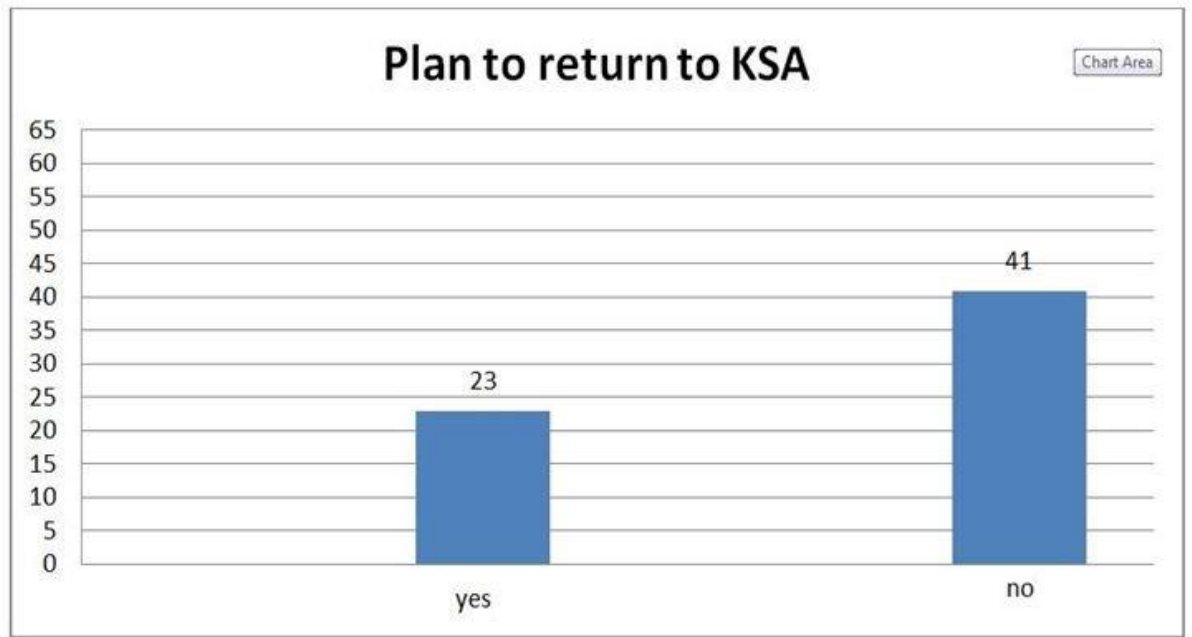
Figure 4: Plan to return to KSA

Figure 4 shows that 23 of the participants had the intention to return to Saudi Arabia when they finished their undergraduate studies, while 41 of them wanted to stay in New Zealand after finishing their study. One participant skipped this question.
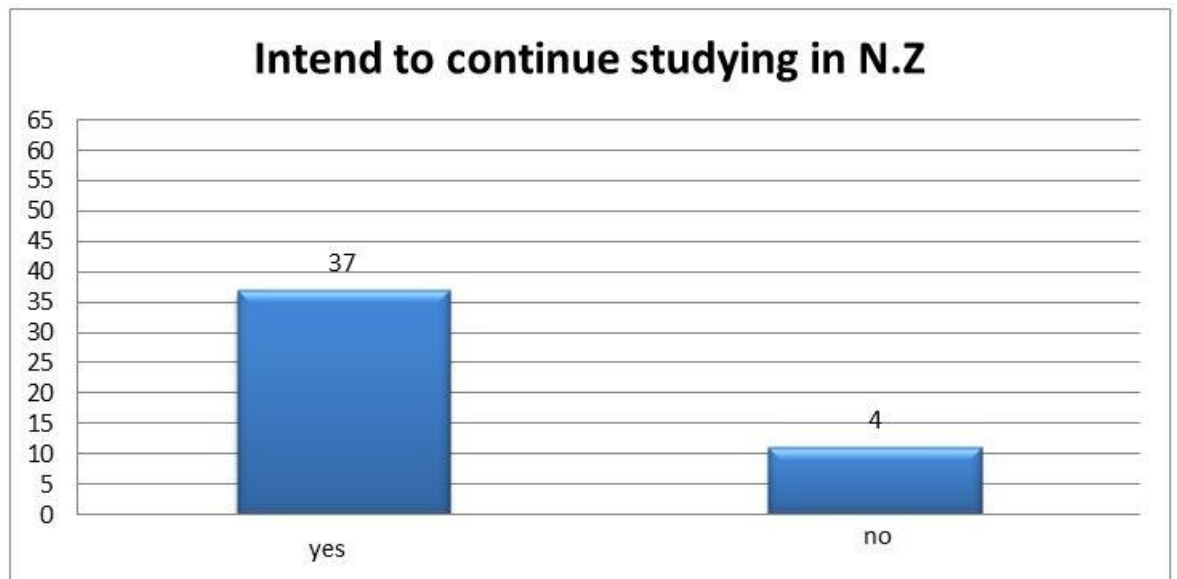
Figure 5: Intention of continuing to study in New Zealand.

The 41 participants who mentioned that they did not want to return to KSA after finishing their studies in New Zealand were then asked whether they intended to continue studying in New Zealand after graduation. As is shown above, 37 participants intend to continue postgraduate studies in New Zealand when they have finished their undergraduate degrees, while only 4 participants wanted to stay in New Zealand for different reasons. 24 students skipped this question. Next they were asked about their English qualifications.
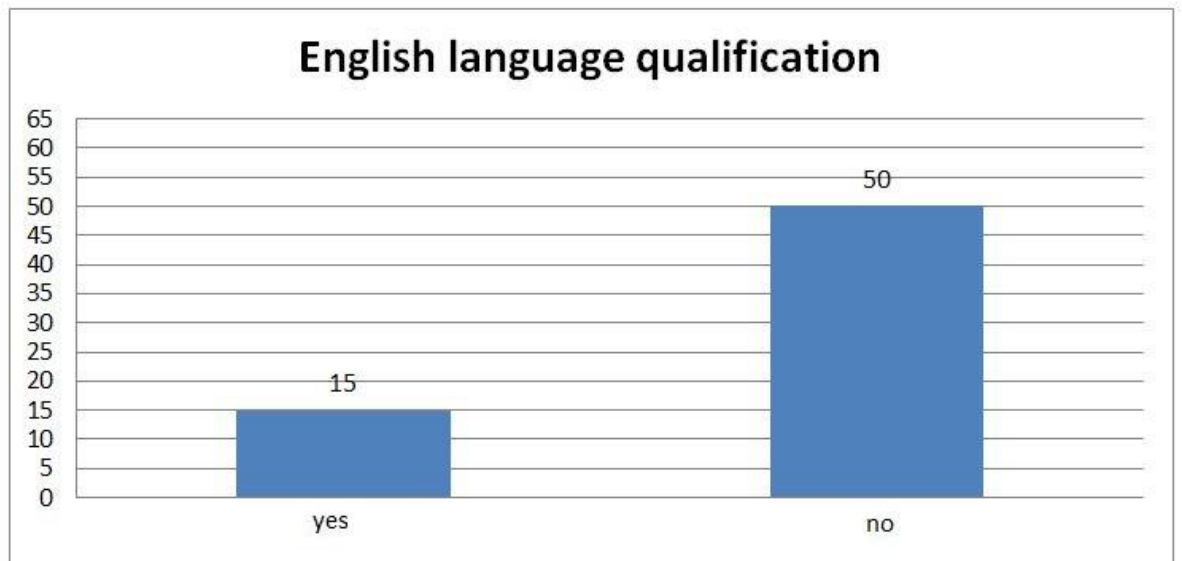
Figure 6: English language qualification

50 participants did not have the necessary English qualifications before they left the Saudi Kingdom to enrol in the New Zealand university. In total, only 15 of the students had done preparatory English courses before being enrolled to study overseas, as shown in Figure 6 above. They were then asked about what kind of English qualification they had.
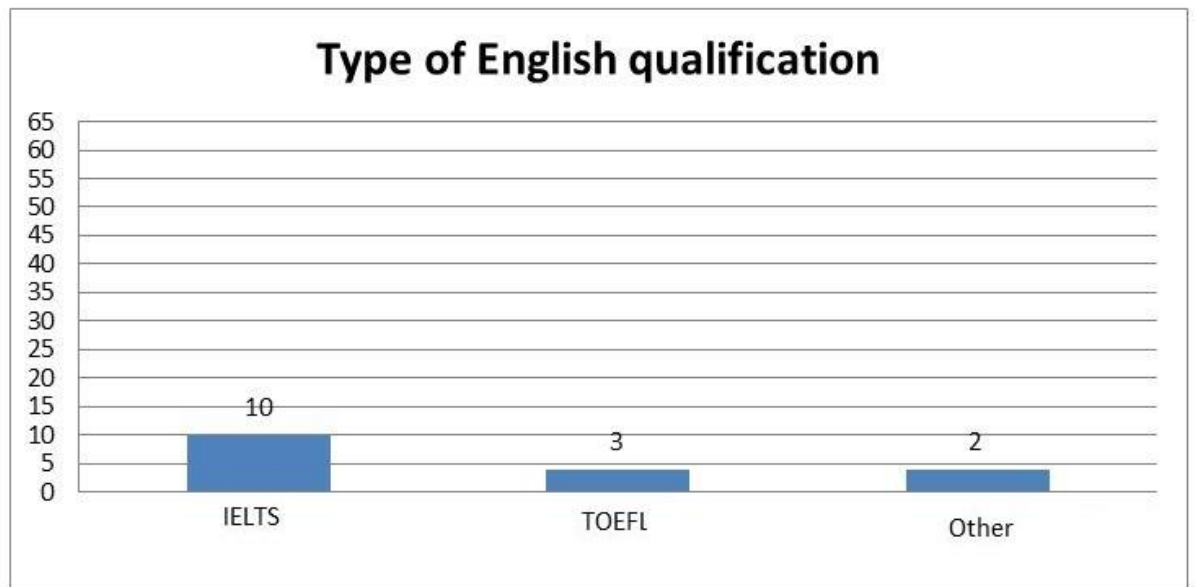
Figure 7: Type of English qualification

The 15 participants who had the necessary English qualifications before coming to New Zealand had different types of qualification. 10 students had an IELTS qualification, 3 students had TOEFL qualifications while 2 participants had local English certificates which students in Saudi Arabia do for entry to the local university. Other students skipped this question. The English qualifications are shown in Figure 7 above. They were then asked about where they had done their English qualifications.
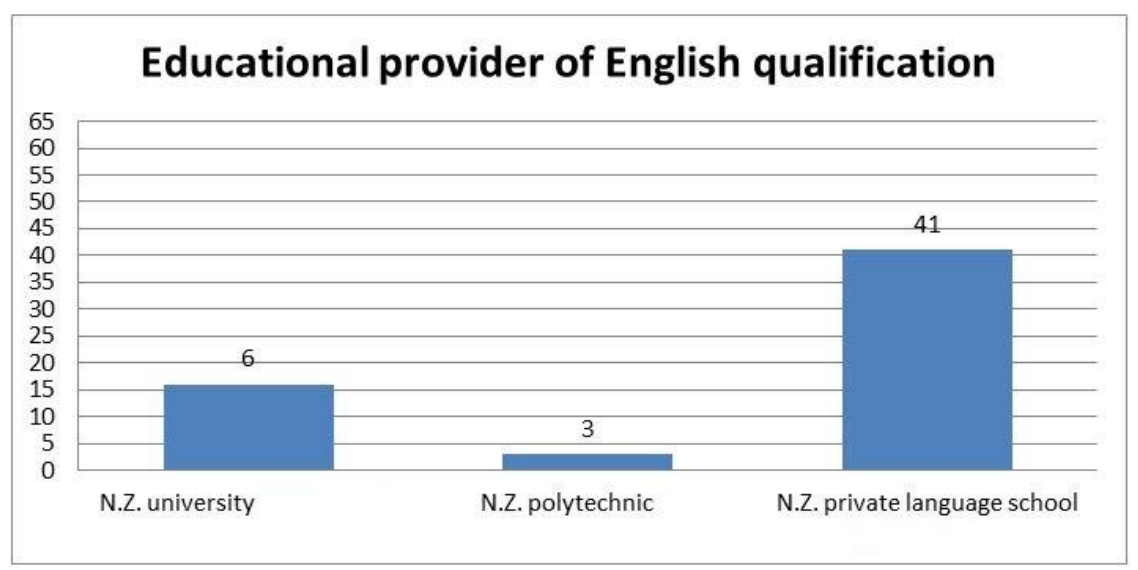
Figure 8: Educational provider of English qualification

Regarding the students who obtained their English qualification in New Zealand, 41of them had obtained their certificates from private English schools, while qualifications from New Zealand universities were obtained by 6 of them and another 3 of them obtained their certificates from a New Zealand. polytechnic. The 15 participants who obtained their qualification in KSA skipped this question. They were then asked about any preparation they had done in Saudi Arabia.
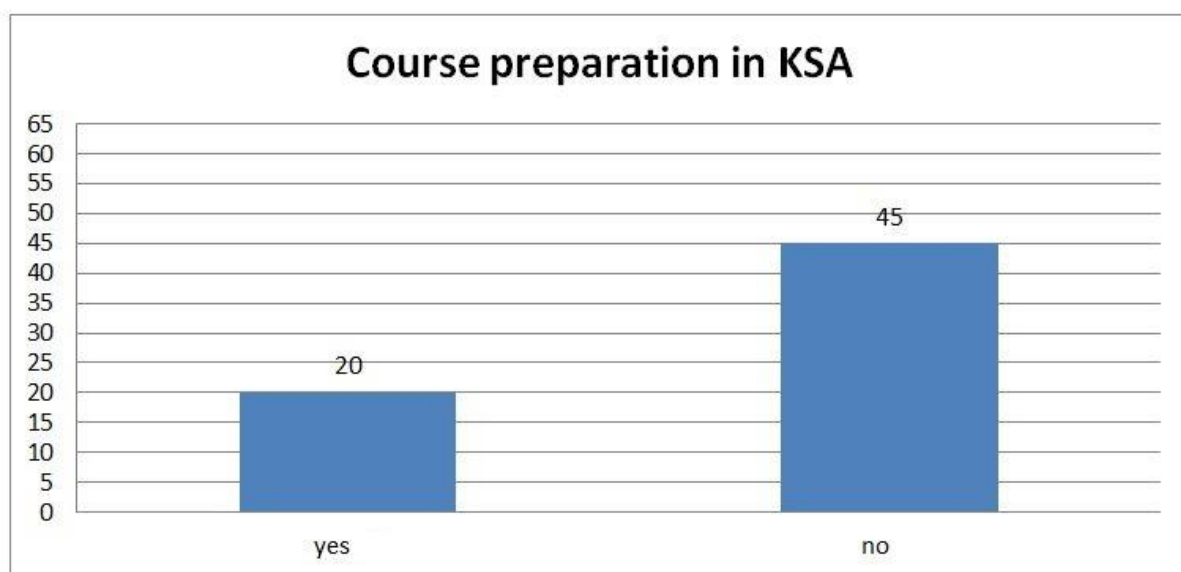
Figure 9: Course preparation in KSA

In total, 45 of the participants did not engage in any of basic English courses to improve their English before coming to New Zealand to study in the university. Only 20 of the participants were involved in English courses in KSA before leaving to study abroad. All of this is shown in Figure 9 above. Next they were asked about their English study in Saudi.
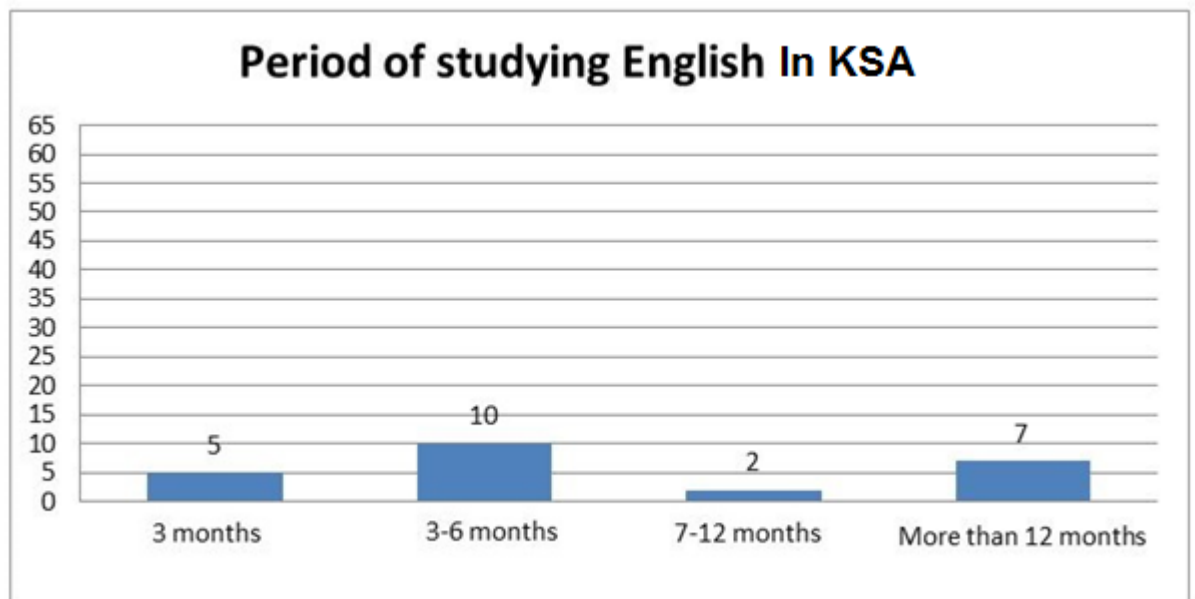
Figure 10: Period of studying English in KSA

The figure above shows for how many years the participants had studied English in KSA. It indicates that 25 students had studied English in KSA for less than a year in comparison with only 10 students who had spent more than 6 years studying English. However, 13 respondents mentioned that they spent 5-6 years studying English. The remaining 9 and 8 participants had spent 1-2 years and 3-4 years studying English respectively. They were then asked about any overseas English study they had done.
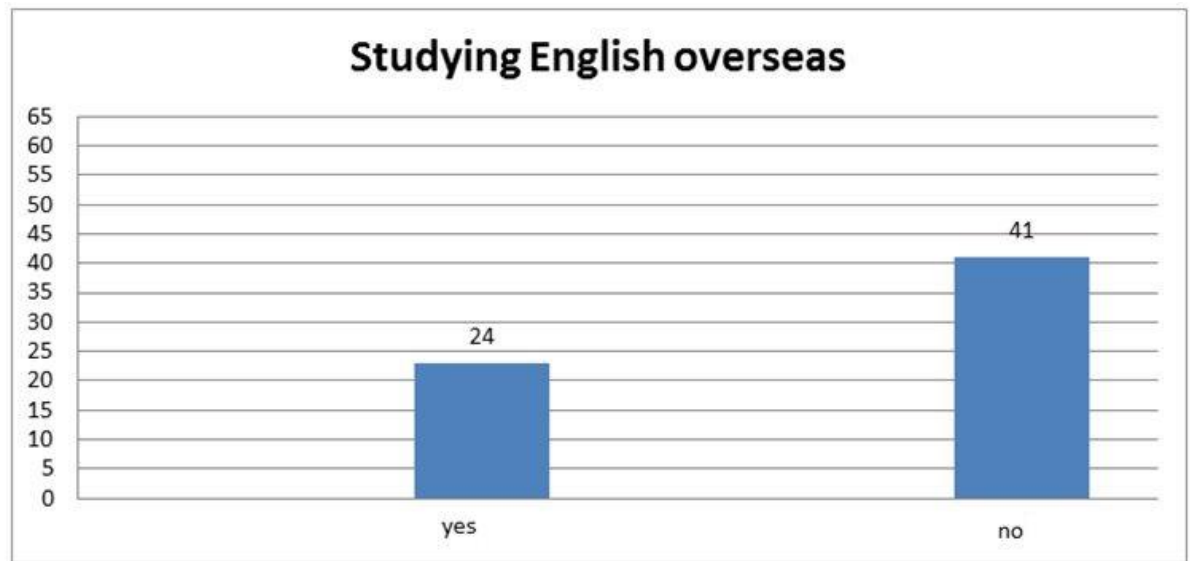
Figure 11: Studying English overseas

Figure 11 above shows that 41 participants did not study English outside KSA before coming to New Zealand. On the other hand, 24 respondents had prior experience with English courses overseas before coming to New Zealand.

4.3   Findings from student interviews

As mentioned in Chapter 3, 10 participants volunteered to complete the semi-structured interviews, as shown in Table 1 in section 3.2.2.

Of the ten students who volunteered, 5 participants were in the age range of 25-30 years old, 3 participants in the age range of 18-24 and 2 in the age range of 31-35. Therefore the largest age group was between 25-30 years old. In this study the participants were Arabic native speakers from Saudi Arabia. All of the interviewed participants were male. Interviewing female participants was problematic because

of Saudi Arabian culture, which does not allow us to talk with a different gender alone in a private place.

In order to understand the challenges of academic writing for the Saudi Arabian students, the following five questions were asked in the interviews with the participants:

1. How regularly do you visit the Student Learning Centre at your university?

2. What kind of support do you have with your academic writing?

3. What kind of support would you like to have with your academic writing?

4. Do you think you are/were adequately prepared to cope with the academic writing you have to do here?

5. What do you think are your greatest challenges in academic writing?

4.3.1   Student Learning Centre (SLC)

The aim of this question was to know if the Saudi students use the services in the Student Learning Centre and if so, how often they visited it. The Saudi students were asked "How regularly do you visit the Student Learning Centre at your university? " Those who went to Student Learning Centre were asked "Why do you visit the Student Learning Centre?"

A total of 10 students answered this question, seven students said they visited the Student Learning Centre every time they needed help.

Help sought from the SLC

Participants talked about their experiences of visiting the Student Learning Centre for getting help with English. Students believed that sometimes they needed help to improve their writing, in particular paraphrasing and organizing their writing assignments. The following is an opinion expressed by one of the students who visited the Student Learning Centre.

> *They will teach you how to write a conclusion, which is paraphrasing everything that you have written in one or two paragraphs.[..], I think that SLC for starting, it was beneficial for me the first time, I will go again when I need to check my essay origination. (Participant 6)*

Proofreading

Proofreading is reading carefully any documents to detect any errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar. The SLC staff may also check the layout. Students thought that the Centre played a great role in helping the student in proofreading their writing assignment and developing their language, as illustrated by a different informant.

> *Actually, I visited the Centre one or two times during the semester, to develop academic language. In fact, the Centre gives the students a lot of benefit in many things. It helps them and develops their language, reveals mistakes, and helps them in proofreading and finds our English mistakes in writing. (Participant 3)*

Almost the same idea about proofreading was expressed by another participant.

Before you submit any assignment, you have to let someone do the proofreading for you that is what my class teacher asked me to do, therefore I went to the Student Learning Centre asking for their help. (Participant 4)

Grammar

Some students said they visited the Student Learning Centre to check the grammar. They think it is useful to go there and get someone to help them check their English grammar in their writing.

I try as much as I can to correct my mistakes such as grammar, spelling, or some words that should not be there, but still have same mistakes so I decided to visit the Student Learning Centre which I found useful. (Participant 9)

However, three students said they did not visit the Student Learning Centre at all and when asked "Why?" they had two main reasons. Firstly, they had someone else they could rely on to help them with their academic writing. Secondly, they thought they should go back to their lecturer and ask him or her for help.

I have a friend who is a native English speaker who helps me to correct my assignment and teaches me how to do it. (Participant 1)

I have heard about Student Support Centre from a lecturer at the university, I didn't need to go to Student support centre. I know this service, but I didn't

go because I have a native friend who helps me in my writing. (Participant
10)

When we started to study at the university, we were told about the Student
Learning Centre at orientation. For me, I didn't visit or need them because
whatever I need, I go back to my lecturer to ask. (Participant 5)

4.3.2   Support with academic writing

Academic writing is an essential requirement so university students need to develop
their skills. The Saudi students were asked "What kind of support do you have with
your academic writing? The aim of this question was to identify the type of support
that students had to improve their academic writing.

Private tutor

Some of the participants thought about other ways to improve their academic writing
rather than using the SLC. They found that using a private tutor is a very effective
method in enhancing their language skills.

I tried to look for an English teacher specializing in academic writing, I
found a lot of teachers, and I was looking at their background and
qualifications. Then, I found a teacher from New Zealand who has a master's

degree in language whom I contacted. I learnt a lot from him about academic

writing. (Participant 7)

Another participant supported the idea of getting help from a private tutor. He said:

My English language when I arrived in New Zealand was so bad.

However, I started studying at an [...] Institute in Auckland, but that

was not enough to improve my English quickly, so I employed a

private tutor to help me with my academic writing. (Participant 4)

Reading articles and course text books

This indicates that students believe that English textbooks can be beneficial in helping them in mastering their language problems.

Actually, a person who reads text books can learn how to write from

reading more and more. There are other things such as academic

articles specializing in how to write academically. (Participant 5)

When you read books or articles you feel that you can track the

thinking of the author. You learn how to use English in the same way,

follow their style. (Participant 10)

Technology

Today, with the advent of the internet, some students prefer to use this to learn academic writing and English rather than studying a textbook.

One of the most popular websites was YouTube.

> *I think listening for scientific research via YouTube is a good way. For example, the professor presents his research or his ideas in YouTube. (Participant 1)*

> *The other thing is You Tube. It is really useful, it can teach you how to write an essay. If you want to write essays or reports just type YouTube, you find many people who explain it. This is especially for the person who is weak in English, he can find people to explain things in Arabic. (Participant 6)*

4.3.3   English course preparation

The Saudi students were asked "Do you think you were adequately prepared to cope with the academic writing that you have to do here?"

English academic writing preparation

Eight out of ten participants took a course before they came to New Zealand. Some of them thought that they had some preparation, but they believed it was not enough, as one of them said:

I attended one of the English institutes, but I did not have any benefit, just learning the basics of the language. For the academic writing I did not see anyone who had benefit from the English institute which I attended. (Participant 5)

Almost the same idea came from another participant who added that he did not believe that Arabic teachers could not make a difference to students' academic writing ability.

To be honest, I remember, when I was studying at the university, I enrolled at an English institute for two months. I was going to my university in the morning and to the English institute in the afternoon, but the same problem existed there again. The teacher came from an Arabic country, and was teaching us in Arabic. (Participant 8)

Two of these students believed they had good preparation in English before they came to New Zealand. One of them studied English in Malaysia before he came to New Zeeland.

I travelled to Malaysia in 2008, I studied English for 6 months. It was really so useful to do that. After Malaysia, I came to New Zealand to do my degree. (Participant 6)

The second one enrolled for courses at a good institute in which the teachers are English native speakers and that helped to improve his language.

> *Yes, the British Council in Jeddah. All teachers were native speakers, no one spoke Arabic. All teachers who were teaching were British. I got a strong base in this centre, I studied at the beginner level and finished it. Then I came to New Zealand, they placed me in the intermediate level. (Participant 7)*

No preparation

Two students did not take any English preparation courses before they came to New Zealand. One of them planned to do the English preparation in New Zealand, which was why he did not do any English course preparation before he arrived in New Zealand.

> *My plan was to come here and to start learning English here in New Zealand. That was why I did not think to take any English course before I came here. (Participant 1)*

The second one believed Saudi Arabia is not a good environment to study English, because he could not practise the English he learnt.

> *I didn't take any English courses in Saudi Arabia. I felt that I could not improve my English there. There is no point in learning something there if you can't use it here. (Participant 4)*

4.3.4 Challenges in academic writing

The aim of this question was to know the challenges of academic writing that Saudi students face. The Saudi students were asked "What do you think are your greatest challenges in academic writing?"

The three main challenges identified by the students were:

- Academic writing style and vocabulary

- Paraphrasing and summarizing

- References and choice of appropriate articles

Academic writing style and vocabulary

Learning styles and methods of teaching in KSA are very different from New Zealand. Students showed their dependence on their lecturer in KSA. Despite the lesson being completely in English, the lecturers in Saudi Arabia did not check spelling or correct. Participant 7 believed that such a style of teaching had complicated their problems in the language.

> *The lecturer didn't care about our spelling, and he told us I know that English is not your language so if the information was correct I will give you the mark. For example, if your spelling was wrong, and all your points and steps were correct, you can get a good mark. He did not care about our spelling at all. He was saying if the idea is correct, it's fine. (Participant 7)*

One of the challenges that Saudi Arabian students face is the continuous use of everyday language in their academic writing, they use the same language they use during daily talk. They find it difficult to distinguish between formal and non-formal writing. That was clear from the answer of some participants:

The problems that I face so far are the subjects that I am studying now. They contain a lot of new and difficult vocabulary. The pronunciation of words is different from writing. When I am trying to write any essay I use the language that I use daily which is informal and I can't remember the formal language. (Participant 2)

I keep making the same mistakes. My lecturer told me I use general language and it is not academic. To be honest I am still struggling to know the difference between formal and informal language. (Participant 9)

Also students did not know how to use academic vocabulary and they struggled when they tried to use it in their academic writing.

A month before, the latest report I did, I was suffering. The biggest problem was using the words, I did not know which word is the appropriate word for the sentence to be completed. (Participant 2)

Paraphrasing and summarising

Students need to summarise or paraphrase an author's ideas by using their own words and integrating them into the structure of their writing. Saudi students emphasised that they found it difficult time to paraphrase any articles or to summarise the idea from books. One students expressed that clearly when they said:

Of course, in writing they asked us to read books or articles on the Internet.
Then we should do paraphrasing or a summary. Then we should rewrite and
reformulate it as we understand it. It's the most difficult thing that we should
to do, we always need help to do it. (Participant 7)

Maybe paraphrasing sentences and using academic vocabulary because
sometimes the teacher asked us to summarize an article and I don't really
know how to paraphrase and summarize it. (Participant 4)

Referencing and Choice of Appropriate Articles

Saudi Arabian students find it difficult to cite correctly the references they use in their academic writing. They said they do not know how to cite and do not know how to choose suitable articles.

Many difficulties. I remember one time, I was working on an assignment,
and the supervisor asked me to read 15 articles and summarize them. Again
the problem is how to cite them. I had to read and analysis them.
(Participant 8)

Maybe misunderstanding the topic and choosing suitable articles. For
example, the professor gave me an assignment and asked me to search
about a specific topic. Sometimes I didn't understand correctly what he

really wants, so I searched wrongly therefore, I also wrote wrongly.

(Participant 2)

4.4   Conclusion

This study has explored the challenges a group of Saudi Arabian students in one New Zealand university experienced with academic writing. The next chapter will discuss the implications of this study.

Chapter Five

5.0   Introduction

This chapter brings together all the findings and discusses the implications of this study. In addition the limitations of the study and recommendations arising are noted.

The aim of this study is to identify the academic writing challenges that Saudi Arabian students are facing. The literature shows no studies that specifically address the situation for Saudi students in New Zealand, hopefully this study will help fill that gap.

5.1 Plans to return to KSA

Results from the questionnaire and interviews show most Saudi Arabian students intend to stay in New Zealand after finishing their study. In addition, they aim to continue with their studies in order to have an opportunity to get a good job with a high salary when they return back to KSA, as salaries depend on the level of the postgraduate degree and the country he or she graduates from.

5.2 Preparation for study in English

Results from the questionnaire reveal that a minority of the students had English qualifications (e.g., IELTS, TOFEL) from Saudi Arabia before coming to New Zealand, while other students obtained qualifications through enrolment in English

courses in New Zealand. This lack of English preparation prior to departure from KSA appears to be due to the poor quality English preparation courses available to students. Students who enrolled for these courses found them of little benefit as they did not address their academic English needs and provided only basic English. In addition many of the teachers are native not fluent English speakers and struggle to teach. There are few opportunities to practice English in KSA. Students who took overseas English preparation courses found these more beneficial due to the higher quality of courses and being able to practice the language daily.

As a result of the lack of preparation courses for academic English and the lack of encouragement for Saudi students to learn English overseas, Saudi students are weak in the English literacy skills that are needed when they begin the overseas higher education. Because of this, Saudi students struggle to communicate with the native English speakers when they begin their study overseas. Furthermore, they face a great challenge to cope with formal literacy practices and disciplinary discourses. These challenges are due to students' previous schooling experiences, literacy background and cultural concepts.

5.3 Help with English language

Saudi students in New Zealand can improve their English especially academic writing as follows:

5.3.1 Visiting the Student Learning Centre

This Centre aims to support them in their English. As Saudi students face difficulties in English especially academic writing, most of them come to this Centre looking for help with their writing. They are shown how to proofread their assignments, paraphrase and structure their writing, and check the grammar.

Students had been told in orientation to visit the Student Learning Centre. Despite lectures's encouragement, some students did not visit the centre founding that the help offered by their lecture was sufficient. Others depended on another source to help them with English, for example private tutors.

5.3.2 Employing Private tutors

Some students are looking to improve their academic English writing in a short period of time, rather than doing long term courses. They look for a private tutor because it is easy to arrange the lessons according to their free time, especially in the evening after finishing their lectures. Furthermore, private tutors are more useful since they concentrate on one student and focus on the problems and the difficulties of one student to help him or her to overcome the challenges he/she faces and improves his/ her academic writing skills. On the other hand, private tutors cost a great deal, but the Saudi council in New Zealand supports students and pays for private tutors under certain conditions, as a part of encouraging Saudi students to improve their English, in particular academic writing skills.

5.3.3 Helping themselves

Students can help themselves by reading books or using internet resources. Books and resources for academic or general English can be beneficial if the reader can follow the authors' explanations about the academic writing and transfer these ideas to their own writing. However, this is time consuming and difficult. It is not easy to find books that are compatible with the required level of English academic writing, and also explain academic writing requirements in a way that these students find comprehensible.

At present, internet resources are easier to locate, and affordable. Students can use them to do a quick check for specific information about academic English without losing time through searching inside books to find the answer. Also the students can find resources online that have a translation or the speaker for the video resources explains and clarifies the main points in Arabic. In addition, the students can find different methods to explain the points they are confused about and can choose the easiest one for them to understand. They can also view multiple and different examples of academic writing.

On the other hand, despite the large number of internet resources for learning academic writing skills, not all of them are good resources. So the students should be provided with reliable internet resources and also should be taught how to identify good sources. These internet resources can be provided through the Student Learning Centre, teachers or lecturers, and English teaching institutions.

5.4 Issues raised by students

According to the findings the challenges Saudi students are facing with English, especially academic writing, can be summarized as follows:

- Lack of vocabulary especially academic writing vocabulary.

- The use of formal language.

- Difficulties in paraphrasing and summarizing articles.

- Difficulties in finding references correctly and finding appropriate articles.

It appears that these issues are, at least partly a result of the educational system in KSA. Therefore, the Ministry of Education in KSA in 2010 approved teaching English in the lower levels of schooling. It was hoped that teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in the schools of Saudi Arabia would equip students to deal with the kind of language required in everyday situations. In addition such instruction should focus on improving student motivation to learn English. The ministry realises that English is the international medium of communication and in order to increase cooperation with other nations And facilitate the transfer of scientific and technological knowledge, levels of English proficiency must be increased (Alzayid, 2012; Ur Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013).

As indicated in chapter two, in higher KSA educations some scientific courses (e.g. medicine and engineering) English is the language of education and all education materials are provided in English, while in the non-scientific courses (courses of humanities ,e.g Arabic literature, Islamic Sharia, etc.) where Arabic is the language of education the student is required to complete the compulsory EFL coursework.

5.5 Recommendations

This study indicates that the following recommendations could improve Saudi Arabian student English proficiency.

- Qualified English teachers are the main requirement to improve English skills for Saudi students. They should be able to teach the required academic English writing skills and be able to help the students understand what is involved in academic writing. Previous studies in KSA (Alkubaidi, 2014; Almutairi, 2007; Alrabai, 2014; Fareh, 2010; Rajab, 2013) point out teachers in KSA use Arabic to teach English. Accordingly, this has led to reliance of the students on inappropriate learning strategies such as memorization and rote learning. In addition Alhawsawi (2014) adds that the teachers' use of Arabic may be due to their own lack of knowledge and confidence in using English, or it may simply be a choice to make their job easier but English cannot be taught well using Arabic only.

- Teaching English in KSA is teacher-centred, not student-centred, therefore there should be changes in this method of learning in order to give the students the opportunity to be more actively involved in language classes. Students could be required to present seminars and complete assignments (Ahmad, 2014; Alkubaidi, 2014; Alrabai, 2014; Fareh, 2010; Rajab, 2013).

- According to Al-Johani (2009), Almutairi (2007), Fareh (2010) and Intakhabalam (2011) students lack motivation and teacher do little to address this. Ways must be found to encourage and motivate students to learn English. For example, they could provide overseas trips to English-speaking

countries. The lack of an environment in which they can practice their use of English effectively is one of the challenges that the students face (Alqahtani, 2011; Khan, 2013). In addition, schools and universities should provide facilities where students can practise English for several hours weekly and hold workshops that include fluent English speakers in order to allow the students to practice the English skills.

- The Ministry of Education needs to oversee the development of facilities aimed at preparing KSA students for study in English medium institutions of higher education. The facilities will be able to address the issues identified by students in this study.

5.6 Limitations

There are three main limitations in this study. First, this study had only 65 Saudi participants for the online survey. Following this, only 10 participants were interviewed. Due to this small sample size the participants' experiences cannot be generalised to another group of Saudi students in New Zealand, as the findings might be unique to the relatively few Saudi students included in this particular research study. In addition no female students were interviewed so this study only presents the male perspective.

5.7 Recommendations for further study

It is hoped that this study has contributed to our understanding about the challenges in academic writing facing Arabic-speakers, in particularly Saudi students, in one New Zealand university. It is important to know the challenges and factors that affect students in order to find new ways to help students to improve their language and academic writing.

With regard to the fact that there are only male participants in this study, at present, the Saudi government is giving more scholarships to Saudi females. As mentioned previously female Saudi students were not part of this study because of cultural limitations where males are not allowed to meet females who are alone. Therefore one recommendation would be that a female Saudi postgraduate student might do a similar study with female Saudi students to see if the situations regarding the challenges of academic writing are the same for both genders.

In addition, future work could include researching Arabic-speaking students in other New Zealand universities or other English-medium universities and examining their experience. It would be interesting to compare the results of this study about Saudi students with other studies in the future, which could find the similarities and differences among Arabic-speaking and other international students. With a better understanding of the challenges academics would be better able to help Saudi students with their academic writing. Overall, all of this should lead to more successful students.

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Appendix A:

Participant Information Sheet in Arabic and English

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

27 March 2014

Project Title

Investigating the academic literacy needs of undergraduate Saudi Arabian students at one N.Z. university

An Invitation

My name is Ayman Abdullah Ankawi. I am a Saudi Arabian student presently studying here for my MA degree. I am sending you this information because I am interested in finding out how well prepared you think you were for your study here in N.Z. I would like to know what you find the most challenging part of your study, especially related to the academic writing that you do for your study. At the end of the research, I hope to be able to make recommendations to N.Z. educational institutes as well as to relevant educational institutes in Saudi Arabia.

The research would involve you answering an online questionnaire, translated into Arabic. You do not have to identify yourself in this questionnaire. If you are interested, you can also indicate your willingness to be interviewed about this. Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of my M.A. research is to learn more about what problems Saudi students have with their study here, and how well they think they were prepared for this study in Saudi Arabia. I am especially interested in problems you experience with the academic writing that you have to do for your assignments.

It is possible that results of the research may be written in future journal articles or presented at conferences.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been sent the online questionnaire (SurveyMonkey) which has been translated into Arabic, because you belong to a club or organisation of Saudi students. Because the questionnaire is completed online, you will remain anonymous. If you are interested in discussing these issues, you can indicate your willingness to be interviewed, and then give your contact details. In any writing or presentation, you will not be identified by name,

but only by a code. Your participation is voluntary, you do not have to participate and you can withdraw at any time.

I am hoping to be able to interview between 10 and 15 Saudi students. If more people indicate a willingness to be interviewed, I will choose people who represent a range of discipline areas.

What will happen in this research?

My research project involves you filling out an online questionnaire that I have translated into Arabic. This is likely to take you between 15 and 20 minutes to complete. If you indicate a willingness to be interviewed, you can choose the time and place of the interview, which will also be done in Arabic.

What are the discomforts and risks?

It is hoped that there will be minimal discomforts and risks. You need answer only the questions on the questionnaire that you wish to answer. You can answer only the questions in any follow-up interview that you wish to answer. You will be sent the transcript of any interview and can ask me to change anything in the interview transcript that you are not comfortable with or withdraw the transcript from the research.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

If you are uncomfortable in any way, you can withdraw from the research and any information you have given to me will not be used. You can also speak to a counsellor here at the university free of charge, if you wish to.

What are the benefits?

I hope the benefits of this research are that we will learn more about whether Saudi students are well prepared for their overseas study, and whether they are well supported in their study here. This is particularly about your academic writing. At the end of the research, I hope to make recommendations to educational institutes both here in N.Z. and in Saudi Arabia about how to better prepare and support Saudi students in their overseas study.

The result of this research should be an M.A. (Applied Language Studies) qualification for me. I hope that what I learn from this research will be helpful to present and future Saudi students.

How will my privacy be protected?

You will only have to identify yourself in the online survey by gender and approximate age, so your participation will be anonymous. If you express an interest in being interviewed, you can supply me with your contact details so that I know how to contact you about where and when you'd like to be interviewed. In the interview transcripts, I will only identify you by gender and approximate age and will give you a code, rather than a

name. This is also be true for any presentations or journal articles I write about the research.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The only cost will be your time – approximately 15 to 20 minutes for the questionnaire and another 30 to 45 minutes for the interview, if you are interested in being interviewed. In addition, it will take approximately 20 minutes for you to read through the interview transcript to make sure it is accurate.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You will be given 2 weeks to consider this invitation.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

You do not need a Consent form to do the online questionnaire. I will send a Consent form, if you indicate your willingness to participate in the interviews. You will then sign the Consent form and return it to me. I will contact you about where and when you would like to be interviewed.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

I will send a summary of the research findings to anyone who expresses interest in having one. You can indicate your contact details on the Consent Form, or by emailing me to ask for the summary.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisors:

Pat Strauss, AUT, 921-9999, x6847 pat.strauss@aut.ac.nz

Lynn Grant, AUT, 921-9999, x6826   lynn.grant@aut.ac.nz

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz , 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

Ayman Akwani, AUT, School of Language and Culture

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Pat Strauss, AUT, 921-9999, x6847   pat.strauss@aut.ac.nz

Lynn Grant, AUT, 921-9999, x6826   lynn.grant@aut.ac.nz

تم الموافقة من قبل لجنة التصديق بجامعة AUT برقم 14/05/12 باوكلاند بتاريخ EC 14/94

استمارة المعلومات

الاسم أيمن عبد الله عنقاوي ادرس حاليا في مرحلة الماجستير. يتضمن مشروع البحث والذي هوا جزءا من تكملة دراسة الماجستير في قسم (دراسات اللغه التطبيقية) عن مدى التحضير الجيد للطالب والاستعداد للدراسة في نيوزيلاندا باللغه الانجليزية كوسيلة دراسة واتصال في الجامعة وماهي التحديات والصعوبات التي تواجه الطالب خلال المرحلة الدراسية وبالاخص الصعوبات التي تواجه الطالب في استخدام الكتابة الاكاديمية باللغه الانجليزية. وفي ختام البحث اتمنى ان اقوم باستخرا ج بعض الاقتراحات التي قد تفيد المعاهد والجامعات في نيوزيلاندا كما انها قد تفيد المعاهد والجامعات الموجوده في المملكة العربية السعودية. مشروع البحث عبارة عن استبيان مترجم باللغة العربية سيرسل الكترونيا عن طريق الشبكه العنكبوتية للتزويد بخلفية عن الطلاب وآرائهم المختلفه وايضا المقابلات الشخصية معهم لمعرفة آرائهم وخبراتهم. كما انك لست بحاجة لذكر الاسم على الاستبيان واذا كانت لديك الرغبه في المشاركه في مشروع البحث يكفي ابداء الرغبه ليتم الترتيب للمقابله الشخصية. المشاركه في هذا البحث وهو عمل تطوعي ويمكنك الانسحاب في اي وقت تشاء.

الهدف من مشروع البحث هوا للتعلم اكثر عن الصعوبات الاكاديمية التي يواجهها الطلاب السعوديين خلال دراستهم في المرحلة الجامعية في نيوزيلاندا وما مدى استعدادهم في المملكة العربية السعودية كحضور دورات او برامج للغة الانجليزية لتأهيلهم للدراسه في جامعات نيوزيلاندا. واهتمامي الاكثر هوا معرفة الصعوبات وأراء وخبرة الطلاب السعوديين التي تواجههم في الكتابة الاكاديمية باللغة الانجليزية.

قد تنشر نتائج هذا البحث في المستقبل كمقال علمي في الجريدة او تعرض في مؤتمر علمي. هذا الاستبيان والذي ترجم الى اللغة العربية قد ارسل لك عن طريق الوب سايت (Survey Monkey) اذا كنت احد اعضاء النادي السعودي. وبما ان الاستبيان قد تم ارساله عن طريق الوب سايت فلذلك سيظل اسمك غامض ولن يظهر. واذا كانت لديك الرغبة في المشاركة للنقاش في هذه الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطالب في الكتابة الاكاديميه باللغة الانجليزيه ما عليك الا ان تبدي الرغبة باعطاء معلواتك ليتم التواصل معك وتحديد مقابلة شخصية . وفي اي كتابه او عرض علمي للبحث لن يتم ذكر الاسم وسيكون الاشارة اليه برمز حرفي. المشاركه في هذا البحث هوا عمل تطوعي ويمكنك الانسحاب اينما شئت.

العدد المطلوب لحضور المقابلة الشخصية هوا بين 10-15 طالباً واذا كان هناك عدد اكبر سيتم اختيارهم بحسب تخصصاتهم الجامعية .يتضمن مشروع البحث اولا تعبئة استبيان مستلم عن طريق الوب سايت ومترجم الى اللغه العربية مدته ما بين 15-20 دقيقه. ايضا اذا كانت لديك الرغبه في المشاركه في موضوع البحث ما عليك الا ان تبدي الرغبة في تحديد موعد ومكان مناسب للمقابلة الشخصية التي ستكون باللغه العربية.

اتمنى ان لا يكون هناك اي مخاطر او ازعاج فيمكنك تعبئة الاسبيان كاملا او الاسئلة التي تريد فقط ان تجاوب عليها واذا كانت لديك الرغبة بالمشاركة في المقابلة الشخصية فايضا يمكنك الاجابة على جميع الاسئله او الاسئله التي تريد فقط ان تجاوب عليها وسيتم تزويدك بالمقابلة الشخصية مكتوبا للاتطلاع عليه. اذا كان هناك اي تغيير او مسح او اضافه فيما قيل في المقابلة الشخصية سيتم ذلك وايضا لك الاحقية بسحب المقابلة الشخصية من مشروع البحث.

اذا شعرت بالانزعاج في اي وقت يمكنك الانسحاب واي معلومات تم تزويدي بها لن تستخدم ابداً في البحث AUT ويمكنك التحدث الى مستشار نفسي في جامعة مجانا.

اتمنى ان نستفيد من هذا البحث للتعلم اكثر عن ما اذا كان الطلاب السعوديين استعدوا بتعلم الكتابة الاكاديمية باللغة الانجليزية قبل بدأ دراسة المرحلة الجامعية في نيوزيلاندا وما العوامل التي يستخدمونها لتساعدهم على التغلب على هذه الصعوبات في نيوزيلاند. اتمنى ان اقوم باستخراج بعض الاقتراحات التي ستفيد المعاهد والجامعات في نيوزيلاند وايضا في المملكة العربية السعودية عن كيفية مساعدة ودعم الطلاب السعوديين بطريقة افضل للتغلب على صعوبات الكتابة الاكاديمية باللغة الانجليزية في المرحلة الجامعية خارج المملكة العربية السعوديه.

نتائج هذا البحث هي شهادة الماجستير في تخصص (دراسات اللغه التطبيقية) التي ساحصل عليها.اتمنى ما سوف اتعلم

Appendix B:

CONSENT of PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Participant Consent Form

Project title: ————————————————————

Project Supervisor: Professor Pat Strauss, Dr Lynn Grant

Researcher: ————————————————————

- I have read and understand the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet.
- I have had opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that the interviews will be recorded.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way. I may also decline to answer any question posed.
- If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including recording or parts, will be destroyed.
- I agree to take part in this research.

Participant's signature: ——————————————————

Date:———————————

Participant's
name:———————————————————————————————————

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 12/05/14 AUTEC Reference number 14/94.

Appendix C

Research survey questions Arabic and English for participants:

It is difficult to show the survey participants' responses as survey questions are posted on a website (Survey Monkey).

Questionnaire

I hope you will be able to participate in this survey which is intended for students to visualize how well prepared you think you were for your study here in New Zealand. This questionnaire is part of the research study, which I am doing at the University to find the most challenging part of your study, especially related to the academic writing that you do for your study.

This is not a test and there are no true or false answers, and it is not necessary to write your name. I am just looking to your background and personal opinion; therefore, give answers transparently to help in completing the research.

Thank you for your help.

I agree to take part in this research ☐

Personal information:

1- *Gender* الجنس   ذكر *male*   انثى *female*

2-*Age* عمر   *18-24*   *25-30*   *31-34*   *35-40*   *40+*

3How long ago did you arrive in NZ? ما هي المدة منذ وصولك الى نيوزيلاندا

1 month   *2-6 months*   *7-12 months*   *more than 12 months*

4- I am enrolled in study at this university انا ادرس في جامعة   *yes*   *no*

5-What programme are you enrolled for? ماهو التخصص الذي تدرسه في الجامعة

_____

6- Do you plan to return to KSA (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) when you finish your undergraduate study? هل ترغب بالعوده الى المملكة العربية السعودية بعد الانتهاء من مرحلة الدراسه

yes   *no*

7- If you answered (NO) to question 6, do you intend to continue studying in NZ?

اذا كانت الاجابه (لا) على السؤال السادس فهل تنوي استكمال الدراسه للمرحله التاليه

yes   *no*

8- Did you have the necessary English language qualification to enrol in your qualification of choice before you left KSA?

هل لديك مؤهلاً في اللغه الانجليزيه قبل مغادرة المملكه العربية السعودية لبدأ المرحلة الجامعية

yes   *no*

9- If you answered yes to question 8, what kind of English qualification did you have?

اذا كانت الاجابة (نعم) على السؤال الثامن فما هوا هذا المؤهل

IELTS   *TOEFL*   *Other*————————————

10- If you obtained your English qualification here, where did you get it?

اذا تم الحصول على مؤهل اللغة الانجليزية في نيوزيلاندا فمن اين قد حصلت عليه

N.Z. university   *N.Z. polytechnic* *N.Z. private language school*

11- Did you do any course preparing you for university study before you left KSA?

هل سبق وقد حضرت برنامج لتعليم اللغه الانجليزية قبل مغادرة المملكة العربية السعودية

yes   *no*

12- If you answered yes to question 11, what was the course and how long was it?

اذا كانت الاجابة (نعم) على السؤال الحادي عشر فما هوا اسم البرنامج وكم كانت مدته

_____

13- Did you do any course in N.Z. preparing you for your tertiary study here? If so, what was the course and how long was it? هل حضرت برنامج لتعليم اللغة الانجليزية في نيوزيلاندا , اذا كانت الاجابة نعم فما هوا اسم هذا البرنامج وكم كانت مدته؟

_____

14- How many years did you study English in KSA? ما هي مدة تعلمك اللغه الانجليزية في المملكة العربية السعودية

less than one year   1-2 years   3-4 years   5-6 years

more than 6 years

15- Have you ever studied English overseas? هل سبق وان درست اللغه الانجليزية خارج المملكة العربية السعودية *yes   no*

16- For how long? كم كانت مدة الدراسة خارج المملكة العربية السعودية

3 months   3-6 months   7-12 months   more than 12 months

Is there anything else you would like to say about your preparation for academic writing in KSA or here? هل لديك اي اقتراحات على برنامج التحضيري لتعليم الكتابه الاكاديميه للغه الانجليزيه في المملكة العربية السعودية او نيوزيلاند؟

_____
_____
_____

_____

If you have the desire to be interviewed in this survey, please register your name, phone number and check the box so I can communicate with you.

Name: I want to participate in this interview

Appendix D:

Interview Questions

The interview questions will be based on exploring answers that students gave to the questionnaire in more depth, and getting more information about their experiences in N.Z.

For example:

1. How regularly do you visit the Student Learning Centre at your university?

2. What kind of support do you have with your academic writing?

3. What kind of support would you like to have with your academic writing?

4. Do you think you are/were adequately prepared to cope with the academic writing you have to do here?

5. What do you think are your greatest challenges in academic writing?