An Analysis of the Gap between Academic Writing and Speaking among University Students in

Saudi Arabia.

BY

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Declaration

The material contained in this dissertation is all my own work. When the work of others has been adopted/paraphrased (e.g. books, articles, handouts, conference reports, questionnaires, interview questions etc), it has been acknowledged according to the academic convention. Sources of direct quotations are clearly identified. I have read and understood the University's statement concerning plagiarism and collusion.

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<u>Acknowledgements</u>

Abstract

Academic Writing is a skill that plays a significant role in the academic development of the university students. On the other hand, speaking represents one of the most required skills by EFL learners to communicate with the English speaking people. Despite the importance of academic writing for undergraduate and postgraduate university students, it is considered one of the most complex skills in English. The purpose of this study is to find out if there is a real gap between academic writing and speaking among the students at Saudi universities and create the required balance and integration between both skills. It also aims to make the EFL students aware of the requirements of academic writing and help them to follow specific steps to become competent academic English writers. To fulfil this aim, two different research instruments: a questionnaire and an interview were used to collect data from 50 EFL learners and twenty EFL teachers at Two public Saudi Universities. The results obtained suggested that academic writing needs to have the same position of speaking for the EFL learners at Saudi universities to get a balance between both skills. The findings also confirm the hypothesis that EFL students face challenges in academic writing compared to speaking.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

English as a foreign language (EFL) learners have not always realised the difference between academic writing and speaking. Consequently, many EFL learners may think that academic writing is a matter of spoken language that is produced on a piece of paper and that speaking is simply a written text being articulated. This misleading understanding is thought to be a major issue for EFL learners. Alqiawi, (2015) in her study on ''Developing students' academic writing based on critical thinking'' outlines that academic writing is the most challenging of all English language skills. These challenge result from the diversity of purposes, topics, activities, and the language level. Also, Reid, (2002) states that writing is the most challenging English skill for EFL learners. Asadifard& Koosha, (2013), pinpoints that one of the reasons of being reluctant at academic writing is the students' failure to interpret the teachers' feedback on their work. On the other side. On the other hand, Baruah (1985) describes writing as a complex skill. Through interaction with EFL learners in Saudi Arabia, it seems clear that the speaking ability of the university students is more advanced than their ability to write academic pieces of work, such as essays, assignments and research projects. To this end, the aim of this dissertation is to explore the gap between academic writing and speaking among Saudi university students and clarify this dilemma. It is concluded that EFL learners at the university level need to realize that speaking and writing are both a reflection of language so as to have a balance of using both skills. The issue might be that academic writing represents an unfamiliar genre for the students who begin their university education. In addition, the teachers themselves do not provide sufficient information about it, its importance in conducting research projects, assignments and even in general writing. So, the problem of not mastering academic writing is not only that of the students but also teachers. When a teacher is asked about students' performance in speaking, a proud feeling is expressed, but as soon as the question turns towards writing the teacher starts to advocate the methods and approaches being used to help the students in writing competency and that the students are responsible for the poor results. Moreover, if university students are asked to express themselves

orally, they may speak without hesitation, and most likely, without mistakes. Nonetheless, if a student is asked to write an essay or even a short paragraph, a problem arises. This would potentially lead to writing anxiety and frustration which hinder the student's writing performance. The reasons for this gap can, most likely, be attributed to the traditional approaches implemented by EFL teachers in elementary, intermediate and secondary schools, prior to the university studies. Idler (2012) also argues that the reason for the weak writing ability is a result of the teachers' lack of recognizing their students learning styles so as to follow their preferences to help them to learn what they like and in the way, they prefer. Furthermore, the problem can be related to the educational system used in both schools and universities. The system used may be outdated, which leads the students to practice grammar and vocabulary in a way that does not provide the students with the opportunity to practice writing. On the contrary, the students may have many resources to get their speaking skills improved. For example, watching English movies, YouTube videos and even establishing conversations with the native speakers of English. As a case in point, the lack of equal opportunities for both speaking and academic writing helps in creating a gap between the outcomes of both skills.

1.1 English speaking and University students in Saudi Arabia

Speaking is one of the most important skills for EFL learners since it helps them to communicate with native English speakers and even with those who are non-native Arabic speakers. This makes English as a Lingua Franca so as to be a medium of communication between two different languages. Moreover, job seekers may find English the language of most of the interviews in which they are involved. Most employers nowadays put the condition of English language fluency as a priority in their job advertisements. Therefore, most of EFL learners focus more on speaking and pay less attention to the other skills of English. The above-mentioned reasons are only a few examples that might motivate the university students to put much effort into mastering speaking skill. On the other hand, language learners may think they would not be exposed to academic writing at all, or at least they will not be asked to write a research paper or a review of literature in their career. The English teachers' justification for the great

interest in speaking and the developed speaking fluency among EFL learners is related, as they see it, to the methods and approaches employed in the language classrooms. For example, teachers believe that using communicative language teaching approach helps the students to communicate well with their teachers, colleagues and with other English speakers in everyday situations.

1.2 Academic Writing and lack of motivation

Academic writing is considered one of the most important skills for researchers and students pursuing academic studies. University students may not be aware of this fact for many reasons. First, students may only think they would need academic writing if they intend to pursue postgraduate studies. Second, academic writing needs more attention, care and more efforts than speaking. Third, the teachers themselves do not provide students with enough information about the importance of academic writing required for their successful studies and future career. The above-mentioned reasons can, in part, reflect the students' lack of motivation to focus on academic writing. Additionally, the materials taught at the universities in Saudi Arabia focus more on listening, reading, speaking skills, grammar, and vocabulary. So, this may represent another case in point concerning the obstacles that face students in improving their academic writing. Furthermore, most of the English tests delivered by the universities, use the multiple-choice question formats, which most likely, lead the students not to think much about writing. Thus, it could be suggested that the role of the teachers in such a situation is very important to give the students the right information and motivate them to learn academic writing. For example, teachers should instruct the students regarding the role of academic writing in history and literature and how this has affected the life of people. Novels, plays and poetry represent a very important factor in the culture of any country. They should give their students examples about the cultural revivals in countries like Great Britain and how Shakespeare and other writers and playwrights helped in shaping the history of this great country.

1.3 Purpose of the study

This study is an attempt to investigate the gap between academic writing and speaking fluency among Saudi university students. In other words, the study will explore the reasons which make the students good English speakers but simultaneously less competent in academic writing. The study will also demonstrate the theories which are in line with or contradict the research questions. Furthermore, the study will provide the pedagogical implications of the study and the outcomes which are sought to help future researchers and students to narrow down or bridge the gap between speaking English as a foreign language and academic writing.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Research questions and Hypotheses of the Study

This paper aims at answering the following addressed research questions:

1. Is there a gap between speaking and academic writing among EFL learners enrolled at the universities in Saudi Arabia?

2. Are the students more competent speakers than academic writers in English?

3. Can using problem-solving procedures and task-based learning approaches help students with academic writing performance and bridge this gap?

Two hypotheses were postulated for the current study:

1. There is a gap which exists between the speaking and academic writing levels of Saudi university students.

2. Implementing problem-solving procedures and task-based learning approach help the students to have a balance between speaking and academic writing.

2.2 The value of the study

In a research by Maher,(2011) on " Poor academic performance and high failure rates in South African tertiary institutions", Hammill and Larsen (1985, in O'Toole, 2010) believe that writing is the "highest and most complex form of human communication" (p. 9). Also, it is viewed as a complex skill because it is developed after one's capability to read and speak, and due to these abilities. Coupled with that, this study assumes that bridging the gap between the levels of English speaking and academic writing of the university students will have many positive results. In the first place, learning academic writing together with speaking improve students' analytical skills. Chiefly, academic writing will motivate the students to look through the literary work of others and form conceptual knowledge about it. With this intention, students learn thinking about the reasons and values of each study they read. Moreover, they understand the added value of the research findings and their contributions to future studies. This preference also enhances their ability

to speak English fluently because it will add new vocabularies and situational language to them. Finally, the study is sought to create a new generation of English language learners who can excel in both speaking and academic writing. The integration between the English language skills can pave the way for this generation towards postgraduate studies, research, writing in newspapers and magazines, or be reporters on TV or any other related careers.

2.3 English language teaching and Saudi -university students

Götz (2012) says that a large body of research has shown noteworthy dissimilarities between L1 and L2 acquisition. These differences in second language acquisition occur as a result of the position of English in the community where a learner of English lives. Alkaff (2013) conducted a study about the attitudes of the Foundation Year (FY) students towards learning English at King Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia. The study involved 47 FY science and arts students. The sample was selected according to the English level of the students. The subjects were chosen randomly from levels 3 and 4, as these represented the majority of the students in the module when the study took place. The study indicated that the majority of the students (93.62%) have a positive attitude towards learning English. She also found that the EFL students manage to develop their English language use and awareness despite the urgent demands related to their time and the lack of chances to us English in everyday situations. Lin and Warden, (1998) in their study involving 346 college-level English language learners at Cyaoyang University of Technology in Taiwan on " Different Attitudes Among Non-English Major EFL Students" , the subjects have studied English for six years, and their ages ranged from 17 to 20. The findings revealed that there is a preference for the majority of the students to learn everyday English. However, others seemed to have anxiety related to their past English learning experiences.

2.4 Academic writing and Saudi -university students

Many studies affirmed that EFL learner could "transfer writing abilities and strategies, whether good or deficient, from their first language to their second language" (Friedlander, 1990, p. 109). Consequently, Maher (2011) explained that an EFL learner, who has the competency to write adequately in his/her first language, could have the same competency to write adequately in English. However, this hypothesis may be different in Saudi Arabia due to the different cultural status. Al Fadda, (2012) conducted a study about the difficulties in academic writing: from the perspective of King Saud University postgraduate students. The study sample involved 50 postgraduate students at King Saud University in Saudi Arabia during the academic year 2009-2010. The data analysis showed that English as a foreign language (EFL) students face many challenges in the academic writing. For example, a challenge to distinguish between written and spoken English, writing a draft and investigating the skills required for effective writing. "SLA research and language teaching have assumed that writing depends on speech rather than being another mode of language" (Cook, 2013: 87). He also stated that a spelling mistake is as essential as a speaking mistake. This point of view refers to the importance of being competent in writing. Zayed, (2009) conducted a study involving sixty-one, third-year, Tourism students from Ismailia Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, Suez Canal University in Egypt. The findings reveal that language is mainly an oral system the primary purpose of which is achieving communication. If these results are adopted, they may lead to under-estimation of the unique techniques and approaches used to develop writing acquisition in an EFL context in Saudi Arabia and other non-native speaking communities. On the other hand, Baruah, (1985) mentioned that writing is a complex skill, meaning that learning academic writing needs more effort than speaking. However, according to McDonough and Shaw (2013), many people write much less than they talk and listen although the need for writing increases as people have more access to computers and email communication.

Ur (2013) pinpoints that writing is of great value, once it is written on paper or a computer, it can be edited, rewritten, and read again. In contrast, speaking, is fleeting and difficult to edit or change. Ur (2013) also

added that the writing goal is to convey a message. Therefore, to convey the right message, the writer needs to stick to the writing conventions. However, she sees that learning academic writing needs more effort and time. Daly & Miller, (1975), observed that there is a writing apprehension phenomenon among EFL learners. This anxiety may affect the writing performance of the EFL learner. Trying to develop the academic writing skill, a hand out designed by Hazel Hall at Queen Margaret University College in November 1998 about "the conventions of the academic writing" demonstrated the different elements that academic text needs to be a successful one. For example, drafting, editing, redrafting to polish the style and organisation of the language. Studies by Folse, (2006) and Nation, (2001), revealed that the students' lack of sufficient vocabulary knowledge and grammar awareness might lead to many errors in the written work, and this could have an adverse effect on conveying the message. Ur (2013) pointed out that good planning leads to very desirable outcomes. In other words, she sees that teachers need to follow some criteria in planning to teach academic writing. Besides, "language in its essence cannot be taught in isolation from its culture." (Ozma Siddiqui, 2014). This viewpoint suggests that the Saudi EFL learners need to Learn about English culture to acquire knowledge which leads to high performance in academic writing and speaking.

In a study conducted by Alqiawi, (2015) at Jeddah University involving 13 staff members from the European languages department and curriculum and instruction department about "proposing a model that adopts critical thinking strategies in academic writing" affirms that the goal of academic writing is to enhance learning development. Also, it has to focus strongly on style and technique. Besides, academic writing develops the critical thinking of the students. So, while writing, students need to leave room for argument (ibid). Henning (2005) states that facing the challenges of learning academic writing requires EFL learners to undertake a number of steps. Firstly, they need to structure the writing of their research project. Secondly, they need to realize where and how to begin and to proceed in the phases of writing composition. After that, they need to be acquainted with pre-drafting, reading, thinking, taking notes and seeing the problem. Finally, they should find solutions to the problem and justify their findings scientifically.

2.5 Major problems of academic writing

In a study by Asadifard& Koosha, (2013), about the teachers' and students' perceptions on writing reluctance, the sample consisted of 60 EFL learners at Lorestan University. 37 were reluctant learners; 28 females and 9 males. The age range was 20 to 30. Also, the study included 12 EFL teachers (10 males and 2 females) who had been teaching English as a foreign language for 6 years. The study results showed that the writing reluctance of EFL students is very high. Meaning that, writing could be the last skill EFL learners think to practice. On the other side, the teachers see that the EFL learners face a challenge in transferring the same level of writing competency in their first language to the second language. In the Ethiopian context, another study was conducted by Abo Melketo, (2012) about the reluctance of writing among Ethiopian university students in an academic writing course. The study involved 20 university students and five EFL teachers. The data was generated by interviews, class observation and focus group discussions. The findings of the class observation, interviews with teachers and focus group affirmed that there is also academic writing reluctance among the EFL students. Abo Melketo, (2012) also claims that there are many studies conducted on the students' reluctance in writing that had no significant reference to the primary challenges reluctant writers face in their writing classroom. Furthermore, these studies were not exposed to teachers' and the students' opinions about the writing reluctance. According to Lamberg (1977), the major problem which university students face in academic writing is the lack of self-management skills. "Self-management" means the features of positively completing the academic performances. For example, recognizing the requirements of the course, understanding the relationship between writing and the course requirements, recognizing the specific measures for an assignment, and detecting or taking decisions about the scheduling of work. If learners cannot manage their written work or cannot have control over their academic performance, they may be unsure about the assignments they should undertake or even the criteria required for accomplishing the task. Also, there will be failures to complete papers or at least late submissions of papers. Buis (2007) attributes the lack of enthusiasm towards writing to the lack of the necessary linguistic awareness and skills to write an academic text. However, she

claims that the factors leading to writing reluctance among EFL students have not been fully investigated. In Hawthorne's first study on "Engaging Reluctant Writers" (2008), here six (1 male and 5 female) teachers from Auckland schools nominated for their range of experience (9 years at least) and backgrounds. The findings indicate that the lack of grammar awareness is the primary reason that leads to incompetence in academic writing. In the second study he conducted, a questionnaire was piloted with 99 students at grade 10 from four different secondary schools. He also added that many students claim that teachers should be the first to be blamed for students' lack of skills in academic writing due to their inability to teach academic writing and the lack of feedback given to students on their writing. Based on the study results, he also added that if there is not a positive attitude of students towards writing tasks, they may gradually lose interest in writing. Ellis, (1994) and Selinker, (1972) outline that not only poor motivation and negative attitudes towards writing were the only causes of academic writing deficiency, but also, the lack of integration between Input and interaction are significant in the academic writing deficiency.

2.6 Grammar and academic performance

According to Hinkel (2013), many studies have proven positive correlations between EFL learners' academic performance and grammar, and writing proficiencies (see Byrd&Reid, 1998; Johns, 1997; Jordan, 1997; Lee& Schallert, 1997; Zhou, 2009). Meaning that, once learners know how to form correct sentences and how these sentences function together to produce a meaningful and effective text, this is the beginning of understanding what good writing is all about and this could be the first step towards writing. Then, students can move on to develop good paragraphs. However, many studies (Ellis,1990; Hinkel, 2002; Nation, 2001; Norris& Ortega, 2000; Schmitt, 2000) have demonstrated that the simple exposure to the different components of L2 (e.g. grammar, vocabulary and formal writing) is not the best way to be a competent academic writer.

2.7 Teachers' role in academic writing and speaking acquisition

In their study involving 20 male students and 20 female students about improving the speaking ability in English, Khan& Arshad, (2012), pointed out that teachers need to have more responsibility and more knowledge and competency to enhance the EFL learners' speaking ability. Besides, they need to create an appropriate environment for their learners to motivate their self-assurance and boldness for asking questions. Another point discussed by Adaba, (2017) in a study about "Exploring the Practice of Teacher-Student Classroom Interaction in EFL to develop the Learners' Speaking Skills": She found that "teachers need to be aware of to what extent their classroom practices facilitate language learning in reality". Also Scrivener (1994) outlines that the teachers' most significant role is to maximise students' interaction in class. In other words, teachers can motivate learners to express themselves and develop their ability to communicate through academic writing as well as speaking. Chimbganda, (2001), Dastgeer and Afzal (2015) have developed approaches and methods teachers could implement to help students in acquiring competency in academic writing. Examples of these approaches are Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Learning (TBL) and the Problem- Based Approach (PBL).

Dailey, (2009) conducted a study on "Key Motivational Factors and How Teachers Can Encourage Motivation in their Students". The study took place at the University of Birmingham. Pae cited in Dailey, (2009) outlines that: because of the non-communication possibility with the native English speakers, and English is only practiced at school, "it is natural that the English instructor should play a more active role in promoting motivation" (2008:23). Likewise, the same case is found in the Saudi context, so, the EFL teacher carries the primary obligation to develop the motivation level of the EFL students in addition to their classroom language.

Therefore, it seems very important for teachers to recognise students' attitudes and motivation towards learning academic writing or any other language skill before they start the process of teaching.

2.8 Speaking of EFL students at Saudi universities

Harmer, (2014) believes that getting the EFL students to speak in class can sometimes be very easy. Wilson (2005) agrees with the easiness of speaking in class. However, he states that planning and practice are significant for speaking success. Thus, students will achieve better results if they have the chance to think about the contents of their conversations and the ways they practice speaking. On the other hand, Mahdi, (2015) conducted a study about motivating reluctant EFL students to talk in class at King Khaled University, Abha Saudi Arabia. The findings of the study reveal that many reluctant EFL learners feel more comfortable with writing than speaking. However, in a previous study by Mahdi, (2014), he assumed that EFL learners' communicative competency could be improved through motivating the learners to take part in different speaking tasks. Al-Ahdal, (2014) led a study about "A Comparative Study of Proficiency in Speaking and Writing among EFL Learners in Saudi Arabia", involving a sample of 90 participants at different Saudi Universities. Table 1 contains the sample details:

Table 1: Al-Ahdal's study participants' details

The number of the participants	80 students from different Saudi universities: Eight teachers Two heads of departments
Gender	Seventy Male students Ten female students Two male teachers Six female teachers One male head of the department One female head of the department
Nationality	All students are Saudi, Teachers are Saudi, Egyptian, Sudanese and Jordanian

The findings of the study show that although English is the only foreign language taught in Saudi Arabia for about nine years from grade four to the university level, most of the EFL learners cannot speak English accurately and fluently. He recommended that the exposure to English speaking needs to be in the classroom and outside it (e.g. by talking to native English speakers who represent a large portion of the expats in Saudi Arabia). Al-Ahdal's study agrees with Ellis (1997) that the discourse rules acquisition is of the same importance of the grammar rules acquisition. On the other hand, Harmer (2014) argues that spoken language has a grammar which is not similar to its written equivalent. For example, instead of asking a complete grammatical question such as, 'Would you like some tea?' in spoken language it can be asked by asking, 'Tea?'. This type of spoken grammar makes learning the spoken language easier than the written language because abiding by the same grammatical rules of written English in speaking may represent a challenge for EFL students. Thus, they become very slow in speaking because they may take longer in thinking about the form of the sentence or the question before they speak. Dincer (2017) conducted a study aimed at eliciting EFL learners' beliefs and conceptualisation related to speaking competency. Sixty EFL students at English department at a university in Turkmenistan were chosen as subjects for this study. They

have studied English at the university for three years and never visited any native- speaking country. The findings show that the EFL learners considered speaking as a skill which require more effort than other skills and at the same time it gives pleasure. However, to take the first step towards fluency in speaking, students should not be upset when they make some mistakes. Dincer (2017) see also that learners have to give themselves the chance to improve their speaking ability by communicating with their peers, teachers or native speakers outside the classroom. The study also affirms that teachers need to give students the chance to practice speaking without stopping them each time they make an error. It is extremely significant to provide a secure atmosphere where the teacher acts as a counselor and has a supportive role (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). This way, teachers give the students more self-confidence and breaks the embarrassment barrier which is seen as the main obstacle non-native students face in speaking practice.

2.9 Academic writing and speaking integration

In a study about "Integrating listening and speaking skills to facilitate English language learners' communicative competence", Tavil, (2010) states that "Integration of skills exposes English language learners to authentic language and challenges them to interact naturally in the language". By this way, "English becomes a real means of interaction and sharing among people" (ibid). Hinkel, (2006) also pinpoints that "Teaching speaking can also be incorporated with writing when the instructional tasks include both oral and written production ". Although speaking and writing are different skills, they still have something in common, that is, they are both productive skills. Hence, providing a model for teaching and organising both skills is possible. A digest created by The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) in 2001, outlines that the integrated-skill approach increases the exposure of authentic language for English language learners and motivates them to interact naturally in the language. For example, by using an integrated- skill approach, EFL learners can combine both the complexity and richness of communicative English by using integrated -skill approach. Mangelsdorf (1989) in Mowlaie and Maftoon (2015), outlines that the EFL teacher can integrate writing and speaking by instructing the learners to make oral presentations about a certain topic that can be used for writing an essay. Then, the students start writing

the essay and do peer assessment to each other. Thus, they could get feedback from their instructor and their peers as well. According to Hinkel, (2006), three major considerations need "to be addressed in the integrated teaching of L2 speaking". Firstly, the "priority is to identify learners' needs and goals" to decide "what types of skills are best suited for integration". Secondly, "to establish the teaching focus and to identify effective teaching and learning strategies and techniques that enable learners to achieve their learning goals" (ibid). Thirdly, "the types and extent of trade-offs that are almost always unavoidable when working on multiple and integrated language skills simultaneously". Another key point EFL learners may be aware of is that English is not only of academic interest nor just a way to succeed in an exam, but is available as a real means of communication and interaction among people. Similarly, integrating both skills endorses the learning of both content and language forms at the same time. According to Harmer (2014), the main factor in the success of productive skills tasks is the teacher's approach to organize them. The basic procedures of teaching both speaking and academic writing can be similar. Firstly, the teacher could use the lead-in stage to engage the students with the main topic they will speak or write about. It is very important for the teacher to discover the students' awareness of the topic they will deal with. Secondly, setting the task for the students and making it very clear would make it easier for them to know what they are going to do. Teachers should make sure that the students have all the information they need to complete their task successfully. Thirdly, monitoring the students while performing the task could help them greatly. This can help students in error correction and give them guidelines and advice, which would make them motivated and actively involved in the speaking or academic writing process. Finally, feedback and follow up stage supports the students to know how good their performance of the task is. It may increase their autonomy and motivation for performing future tasks. Similarly, to integrate academic writing with speaking in the classroom, teachers should give the students solutions for the difficulties they could face in both skills. First, the students may have difficulty of recalling certain vocabulary to speak or write about a topic. According to Harmer (2014), improvising is the solution for such a problem. However, this can only solve the problem temporarily and is more appropriate in speaking rather than academic writing. Another

strategy which can be used for both speaking and academic writing is paraphrasing if the students cannot find the exact vocabulary to express the message they intend to convey. Not only are the teachers responsible for the success of the integration between academic writing and speaking tasks, but also the students. Planning in advance makes their tasks easier and manageable. They may bring their ideas together to form the correct structure of the task they will do. To put it differently, the responsibility of planning to integrate language skills in the EFL classroom is not an easy task for the teacher.

2.10 Task-based learning:

In Willis (1996), a research based on hours of classroom recordings reveals that the role of the student in teacher-led classroom interaction is that of responding: in a 45- minute lesson multiplied by 4 lessons a week in 36 weeks yearly, an average student in a 30- student classroom will get one and a quarter's talking hours yearly in class. If the learners are allowed to interact in pairs for ten minutes in each class, this allows each student 12 hours of speaking interaction yearly. Although this is not the desired result but it is at least some improvement. This result led to a change in the approaches and methods many teachers use in the EFL classroom. One of the most important approaches to help in the interaction of the EFL learners in class is the task-based learning approach. This approach depends on assigning interactional tasks to the students so as to create an environment of collaborative work.

 According to Shehadeh and Coombe, (2012), the strength and flexibility of the classroom task as an educational tool, and a learning activity contribute to successful language learning. "These pedagogic features have also made tasks effective treatments for encouraging learners to engage in goal-oriented social interaction during which they exchange information and negotiate to achieve its comprehensibility" (ibid: XVI). Moreover, the task-based approach may direct them towards the objectives through which they exchange information and negotiate to achieve understanding (ibid). In Ellis, (2009), Both Skehan （1996）and Willis （1996） suggest that merely observing others performing a task could help decrease the

intellectual load on the learner. Ellis, (2009) also presented in table 2 a framework for designing task-based lessons to develop both teachers' and students' interaction in the EFL classroom.

Table 2: A framework for designing task-based lessons by Ellis,(2009)

Phase	Examples of options
Pre-task	- Framing the activity　（e. g. Establishing the outcome of the task） - Planning time - Doing a similar task
During task	-Time pressure
Post-task	- Number of participants - Learner report - Consciousness-raising - Repeat task

These procedures mentioned in table 2 allows teachers to implement a task-based approach in teaching both academic writing and speaking to encourage students to overcome the anxiety of speaking or assignment writing. Based on the digest created by The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) in 2001, in the task-based model, group work and pair work are used to help and support EFL learners to interact and collaborate with their classmates and as well as with their teacher. In other words, learners could work together in a role play activity like acting a scene from a famous play, writing a report about an incident to be published in the university newspaper, or participating in any other collaborative task.

2.11 problem – based learning(PBL)

In Pakistan, Dastgeer & Afzal, (2015) conducted a study involving improving English writing skill by implementing problem- based learning in the EFL classroom. The study was conducted at Islamabad Model College for boys involving 156 students of the ninth grade using t-test and descriptive statistics. The findings of this study show that PBL was more pedagogically efficient than the traditional lecture method

in developing English writing skill. In their study about "Problem- based learning in the English language classroom", Othman& Shah, (2013) had two objectives: Firstly, to examine the efficiency of PBL on students' acquisition of course content. Secondly, to find out the PBL effects on their proficiency. The study involved 128 third-year students at IIUM in Malaysia divided into four language classes, with 36 to 42 students each. Two of the classes implemented the PBL approach while the others took the traditional lecture approach for 14 weeks the findings of the study reveal that there is a noteworthy development in the language aptitude in the PBL classes than the non- PBL ones. The results were attributed to the critical and extensive writing during the 14 weeks to solve the PBL tasks. In Othman& Shah, (2013), Watson (2001, p.3) points out that in PBL" Students work with classmates to solve complex and authentic problems that help develop content knowledge as well as problem- solving, reasoning, communication, and self-assessment". Based on the studies included here, there seems a lack of a reliable and persuasive evidence that PBL could eliminate the challenges that face EFL learners in academic writing and speaking. However, these studies and opinions were true to the principles of PBL and its achievements in improving academic writing and speaking in the EFL classroom. According to Coe, (1981), to change the quality of the spoken or written product, teachers need to change the process which produces both or any of the tasks. In other words, teachers need to use active learning in the classroom. Active learning (e.g. learners setting their own goals) will achieve the best outcomes for both academic writing and speaking (ibid). So, to make problem-based learning successful, teachers need to teach learners how to find a solution to a problem after defining it. If teachers skip the problem defining stage and give learners the information directly without allowing them to define the problem, they may not be able to perform the assignment as required.

This review of literature related to the gap between academic writing and speaking indicates that there is plenty of research discussing the academic writing challenges and other research discussing the speaking skill challenges. However, little research has been conducted to discuss the gap between the academic writing and speaking skill at the university level. Furthermore, this study was conducted in a different context (a non-native community) like Saudi Arabia. The purpose of this study is to explore the possibility

of bridging the gap between academic writing and speaking or present more innovative solutions to help to

fill in this gap in the Saudi context.

Chapter 3 : Methods of study

This chapter will provide the details of data collection process. The details will encompass the aim of this study, the tools used for data collection, the participants, groundwork and preparation, the process of distribution and collection of data, data collection tools (qualitative and quantitative) and data processing.

3.1 The aim of the study

This study has different aims: Firstly, the study will try to find out the reasons leading to a gap between the academic writing and speaking competency among university students in Saudi Arabia. Secondly, it will demonstrate the possibility of filling in this gap by using approaches and methods like task-based learning approach and problem-based learning approach.

3.2   The participants

Tables 3 and 4 present the details of the participants.

3.2.1   Students:

Table 3 - Details about participating students

The number of the students	50 participants from two different Saudi universities: King Saud University and Arab Open University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Gender	Male students
Age	18-21 years
Nationality	Saudi
English proficiency level	Upper intermediate to advanced
The place where the study took place	(1) Arab Open University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (2) King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Major study of the participants	(1) The students of Arab Open University are studying Business Administration (final semester). (2) The final year students of King Saud University from the College of Tourism and Archaeology .
Future goals	The goals of the students vary from being ambitious to complete their postgraduate studies in the field of business or being graduated to start job hunting directly.
The period and date of the data collection	The study began on 17th December 2017 for one week to collect the data.
Data collection tool	A questionnaire for all the participants and interviews for a sample out of them

All the participants in this section are students of the final year in the university. The students from Arab Open University are studying Business Administration. The languages used in the study are English and Arabic, so the students need to have proficiency in English. Therefore, the sample was selected according to their English level which is upper intermediate to advanced. On the other hand, the language being used in the study at King Saud University is Arabic, but English is taught as a second language. Moreover, the candidates for postgraduate studies in all Saudi universities are required to prove their English language proficiency by passing TOEFL or IELTS with acceptable scores. The goal of the university is to prepare the students either for completing their post-graduate degrees or preparing them to compete in the business market. Thus, English language teaching has a great value in Saudi universities.

3.2.2   Teachers

Table 4 - Details about participating teachers

The number of the teachers	25
Gender	Male teachers
Nationality	Most of the teachers are Arab, whereas a few are British and Pakistani.
Academic background	All teachers have MA degrees in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) or equivalent, as this degree is the prerequisite for Saudi universities for hiring English language teachers. Most of the teachers also have certificates of teaching English as a second language like CELTA or TEFL.
Teaching experience	Minimum 5 years
Date of the questionnaire and interview	18 December 2017
The place of the interviews	(1) Arab Open University: The library of the university (2) King Saud University: The teachers' educational resources room

The reason behind not choosing female participants is the difficulty in contacting either female teachers or students due to the separation of female sections from male ones in Saudi universities. However, the results might have been more productive if the samples had been taken from both genders. This point will be reiterated as one of the limitations of the study.

3.3   Data collection tools

Two types of data collection tools have been used in this study: a questionnaire for both the students and the teachers and interviews for a sample of teachers. "The popularity of questionnaire is because it is easy to construct, extremely versatile and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily processable" Dornyei, and Taguchi (2010: 1). The questionnaire was designed with closed-ended questions to make it easy for the students to answer them without consuming too much time. The interviews were designed to have both closed and open-ended questions to get broader answers to the questions. Using these types of questions seem to help in developing critical-thinking skills in the students. This critical thinking helps the EFL learners at the university level to be aware of the importance of academic writing as well as speaking. Besides, learning integrated skills without focusing on one while ignoring the other will lead to the sought goal of English language competency. Using open-ended questions will also help in investigating the students' attitudes concerning both skills. Meanwhile, the interviews with the teachers will use the open-ended questions to give the teachers the opportunity to speak their minds and give more details about the causes of the gap between speaking and academic writing in their classrooms.

3.3.1   The questionnaire:

The questionnaire was designed according to Likert Scales. By using this kind of questionnaire, the answers expected are not simple yes / no answers from the respondent, but relatively allow the degrees of the point of views besides even no opinion at all. So, quantitative data can be analysed quickly. Furthermore, the questionnaire was used in this study because it is a type of research method which is practical and can help in collecting a significant amount of data from a large number of people (participants) in a brief time. Moreover, the results of the questionnaire can be analysed quickly and scientifically than any other type of research methods. Also, it can measure the change between two ideas or theories by comparing and contrasting and can lead to test an existing hypothesis or even create a new theory.

3.3.1.1   Designing the questionnaire

McDonough (1997) noted that speaking is not only an oral production of written language. Instead, it is the learners' mastery of some sub-skills which form an overall competence in the spoken language. On the other hand,   Cormack, (2013) stated that the purpose of academic writing, besides other kinds of writing, is to communicate effectively. Moreover, academic writing is one of the main windows for the learners to express their thoughts. Therefore, it is essential that the learners learn the best way of writing to enable the readers to understand the topic of the written assignment. In other words, spoken and written languages constitute the core of the communication of information among people. However, the results of EFL learners in Saudi universities show a gap between the competency level of academic writing and speaking. In other words, the level of academic writing is not as high as the speaking level. So, a questionnaire was designed is an effective way to demonstrate the causes behind the discrepancy in academic writing and speaking competency level among the students in Saudi universities. In like manner, the questionnaire also threw the light on some ideas, approaches or methods which play the role of troubleshooters to fill in this gap. Dornyei and Taguchi (2010) demonstrated that the questionnaire needs to include attitudinal questions to measure the respondents' opinions, attitudes, values and beliefs towards a particular target. If some students were unable to understand the questions thoroughly, the teachers act as facilitators to make sure that the students comprehend all questions and to guarantee that the answers will be accurate. The questions were closed-ended to get direct and fast results. Also, no open-ended questions were used in the questionnaire to save time. The questionnaire included three parts each one deals with a different issue.

3.3.1.2   Parts of the questionnaire

The questionnaire started with an introduction including the purpose of the study. Part 1 dealt with the attitude of both students and teachers towards the importance of speaking skill. This section included five questions. The answers to these questions can be provided on a Likert scale. The frequency scale of the answers was five degrees starting with "strongly disagree" and ending with "strongly agree" which helped

in facilitating quantifying data Payne and Payne, (2004). Part 2 dealt with the attitude of teachers and students towards academic writing. This section investigated the attitude of teachers and the students towards academic writing. It consisted of questions from 6 to 10. The answers to these questions ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" like the first section. This rating scale allowed the respondents to express both the direction and strength of their opinion about the research topic. Part 3 dealt with the methods and approaches used for integrating academic writing with speaking. Many methods and approaches are used in EFL learning. However, in this part, the questions focused on the role of using task-based learning approach and problem-based learning in integrating both speaking and academic writing.

3.3.2 Teachers` interviews

Despite the fact that online surveys are popular, interviews also represent a simplified data collection tool. An interview is a method that provides more detailed and accurate data. McDonough (1997) believed that the interviews represent one of the most appropriate data collection methods related to academic research. Based on this opinion, 8 out of 25 teachers that represent the research sample were interviewed to get more accurate results related to the research question. The teachers were informed about the purpose of the study to be ready for the interview. Also, the place and time were discussed with the teachers to have a suitable environment to conduct successful interviews. The interviews took place in the library during the break time of the teachers. The questions used in the interviews were open-ended to give space to teachers to explain their opinions regarding the research question. The interview consisting of 6 questions was divided into three sections like the questionnaire to support the data collected by the questionnaire. Teachers were asked if they could be happy with recording the interview. Some teachers did not like the idea, so they preferred to write the answers to the questions, but the others did not mind recording the interview.

The first two questions explored the attitudes of teachers and students towards speaking and academic writing. The third question discussed the obstacles that both teachers and students may face in teaching/ learning academic writing and speaking. This open-ended question provided the chance to the participants

to elaborate the real problems that affect their perception of both skills. Question 4 investigated the role of teachers in supporting the learners' competence in English especially in academic writing and speaking. The fifth question discussed the methods and approaches teachers can use in the classroom to develop the learners' academic writing competence to be consistent with their level of speaking level. The last question dealt with the importance of grammar for academic writing competence. It also demonstrated the significance of spoken grammar and its role in the students' fluency in speaking.

3.4 Procedures

The distribution of the questionnaire took place during one of the English language classes. English teachers were contacted before distributing the questionnaire for providing facilitation in case of complicated questions. The students were informed that this questionnaire is voluntary and they were given assurance that no personal data is going to be collected. Furthermore, the teachers instructed the participants about the timing of the questionnaire which will not take more than 15 minutes to finish. They were encouraged to give answers that reflect their real attitudes and reflect their beliefs regarding the research question. Finally, the questionnaires were collected back by the teachers after making sure that all participants have answered all questions.

3.5 Data processing

The quantitative collected data were processed and analysed by using Microsoft Excel. The results obtained from the participants (students and teachers) were entered into tables manually. Also, a chart was designed to understand the results in terms of frequency. Also, special consideration was given to distinguish between different parts of the questionnaire to create clear sequence and coherence of the collected results. After that, the data was presented by using charts for the clarification of the results.

3.6. Limitations of the study:

Finally, like any human work, there are still some limitations in the study. Firstly, the study was supposed to target both male and female students to get more comprehensive results. However, due to the cultural background in Saudi Arabia, it was not easy to have access to the females' campuses to do the study. So, the study targeted only male university students, and this may have affected the results' accuracy. Secondly, the students' primary study was not English language, so it seemed awkward to get the expected accurate questionnaire results mainly from the students of business administration department at the Arab Open University. Finally, this study suffered from a shortage of references of a few parts (e.g. the integration of academic writing and speaking). Thus, this may have affected the critical writing in such parts.

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Chapter 4: Results

The primary goal of this chapter is to display the findings of data collection tools by analysing figures, tables and charts. Data collection tools have been used in this study to investigate the gap between speaking skill and academic writing among university students in Saudi Arabia. Firstly, there is an analysis of the students' questionnaire followed by that of teachers. Finally, there is a descriptive analysis of the teachers' interviews to compare teachers' views and attitudes towards the gap.

4.1   Students' responses to the questionnaire

A total of 50 motivated upper- intermediate to advanced level Saudi university students completed the full preliminary questionnaire. Almost half of the participants study at Arab Open University in two classes. The other half of the participants are in two classes at King Saud University. Both universities are in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. One of them (Arab Open University) is a private university, but the other (King Saud University) is a government university. Table 5 shows that the outcomes of Speaking and academic writing in both universities are not consistent. The results attained by the students indicate the gap between both skills. Also, the schedule shows in detail the percentage of the students who are with or against the hypothesis of this research which states that there is already a gap between oral fluency and academic writing among the students in Saudi universities.

Table 5: students' responses to the questionnaire

Question	strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		agree		strongly agree	
Question 1	1	2%	5	10%	4	8%	17	34%	23	46%
Question 2	14	28%	6	12%	9	18%	18	36%	3	6%
Question 3	3	6%	10	20%	8	16%	19	38%	10	20%
Question 4	2	4%	8	16%	6	12%	19	38%	15	30%
Question 5	5	10%	8	16%	10	20%	13	26%	14	28%
Question 6	20	40%	14	28%	6	12%	8	16%	2	4%
Question 7	2	4%	2	4%	6	12%	23	46%	17	34%
Question 8	5	10%	5	10%	7	14%	18	36%	15	30%
Question 9	15	30%	17	34%	7	14%	9	18%	2	4%
Question 10	11	22%	22	44%	9	18%	5	10%	3	6%
Question 11	1	2%	2	4%	3	6%	21	42%	23	46%
Question 12	6	12%	10	20%	10	20%	12	24%	12	24%
Question 13	2	4%	2	4%	4	8%	28	56%	14	28%
Question 14	1	2%	7	14%	1	2%	25	50%	16	32%
Question 15	17	34%	23	46%	4	8%	5	10%	1	2%

As noted in table 5, the questionnaire is divided into three sections as explained in the previous chapter. The first section includes 5 questions discussing the attitudes of the students towards the speaking skill in EFL classrooms. The second section consists of 5 questions discussing the attitudes of the students towards academic writing, whereas the third section demonstrates the methods and approaches implemented to improve the quality of teaching academic writing as well as speaking. Surprisingly, about 80% of language learners at King Saud University and Arab Open University mentioned that the English speaking skill is more important than academic writing. So, they are keen to learn to speak English fluently. However, only about 12% are against this point of view. The results of question 2 suggest that the methods and approaches used by teachers to develop the pedagogical process of both speaking and academic writing are not easy to interpret. The percentage of students who find the approaches and methods used by teachers in the classroom easy is equal to those who took a negative attitude towards that issue. The results of question 3 report that about 58% of the students think that fluency and being native-like speaker of English could help them in finding a job easily. On the other hand, about 26% of the respondents think that being a native-like speaker of English is not necessary to get a good job. Similarly, the results of 4th question show that the majority of the students (68%) affirm the positive attitude towards learning speaking, whereas the results of question 5 could be comprehended in the light of the widely spread idea in Saudi Arabia that native teachers achieve better results in EFL teaching than non-native teachers. Hence, about 54% of the respondents find that being a native English teacher is very important to achieve better results in the classroom. The second section of the questionnaire deals with the attitudes of the students towards academic writing. Results of question 6 show that a remarkable percentage of the respondents (68%) stand firmly against the idea that academic writing is not important for university students. On the contrary, about 20% of the respondents believe that being competent in academic writing may not add any value to them. Interestingly, the results of question 7 show that over 80% of the students expressed positive attitudes towards the idea which states that academic writing needs more effort by the teachers as well as the students. On the other side, about 8% only responded negatively to the same question. Results of question 8 clearly

show that 66% of the students have positive attitude towards the importance of being competent in academic writing. Such results reflect the great importance of learning academic writing in the university. The percentage of respondents who stood against the popularity of writing essays among university students was remarkable; 64%. On the opposite side, about 22% only agreed that writing an essay is easier than being involved in a conversation in English. This result supports the hypothesis of this study and makes clear that the gap between academic writing and speaking among university students in Saudi Arabia could be real. The last question in the second section of the questionnaire shows an apparent support to results of question 9. Almost two-thirds of the participants is not in favour of dealing with challenging academic assignments. The third section of this questionnaire deals with the methods and approaches being used in the classroom and their effects on the students' performance. Results of question 11 show that 88% of the respondents see that teachers should explore the students' learning styles to achieve better results in academic writing and speaking. Only about 6% of the respondents find that learning styles' knowledge by teachers does not affect the learning process. Regarding question 12, the results indicate that 48% of the respondents agree that implementing problem-based and task-based learning approaches leads to competency in both academic English and speaking. However, 32% disagreed to this point of view while 20% did not take any of both sides. The anxiety of making mistakes is the core of question 13. About 84% of the students agreed that anxiety affects the competency level of EFL learners in both academic writing and speaking, while 8% only expressed their disagreement. In question 14, 82% of the respondents affirmed positive attitudes towards the importance of grammar for academic writing competency, while 8% only showed negative attitudes. In response to question 15, a remarkable percentage of the respondents (80%) stood firmly against the idea which illustrates motivation as a support for speaking other than academic writing. On the other hand, 12% only agreed to the same idea.

Chart 1 – Students' responses to the questionnaire

This chart was designed to give a quick and clear interpretation of the students' responses to the questionnaire,
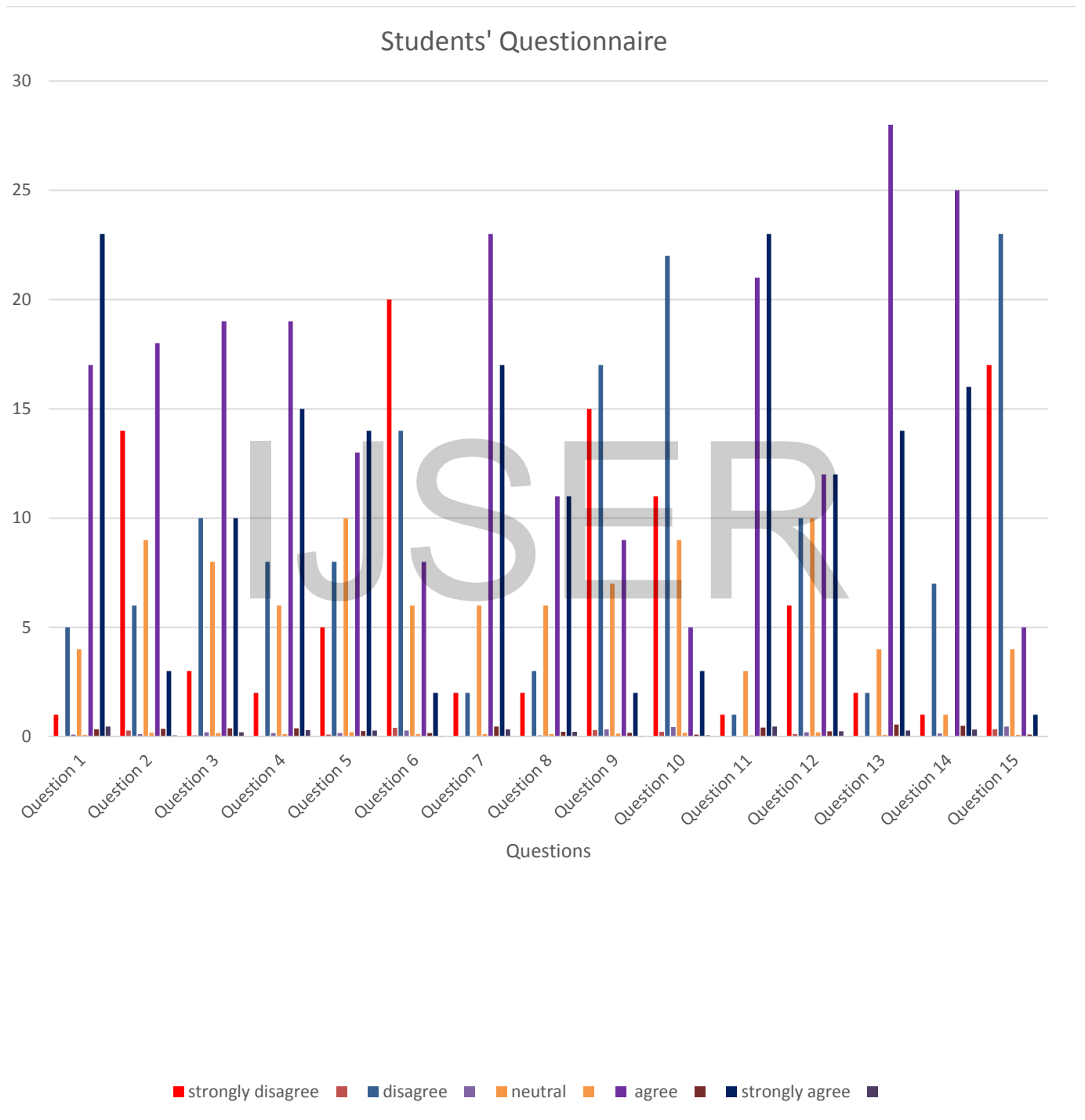
4.2 Teachers' responses to the questionnaire

Teachers' responses to the questionnaire show a partial agreement from some teachers with the hypothesis of this study which refers to a gap between the outcomes of academic writing and speaking in Saudi universities. The responses to the first question show that about 56% of the teachers believe that speaking is more important than the other skills of English, while about 32% only disagree with this idea. The results of question 2 lead to the suggestion that the methods of teaching are not implemented in a way which helps the EFL learners to be motivated, fluent speakers. Interestingly, more than 44% of the teachers responded to the questionnaire admitting that the methods and approaches they use in the classroom are not adequate to develop the EFL learners' oral fluency. In question 3, about 40% of the respondents reported that it is not a major feature to be a native-like speaker of English to get a good job. The results of question 5 suggest that being a native English teacher is not significant to achieve better results in the classroom. A remarkable percentage of the respondents to question 6 (about 76%) expressed their disagreement with the question. In contrast, 20% of the respondents believe in the insignificance of teaching academic writing to university students. In question 7, the percentage of teachers who agreed that academic writing needs more effort from the teachers as well as the students was 84%. Only 12% think that teaching the academic writing does not need any extra effort than other English language skills. The results of question nine support the hypothesis of this study. About 64% of the respondents find that writing an essay is not easier than participating in a conversation, while only 28% of the respondent find it easy. The content of question 10 is somehow similar and related to question 9. It expresses the idea that EFL learners enjoy writing the challenging assignments and do challenging research work. The results of this question agree with the results of question 9. About 68% of the respondents disagree with this idea. The results of question 11 indicate that 84% of the respondents believe that there is an urgent need of exploring the students' learning styles to implement the activities which appeal to their learning styles and achieve the required outcomes of the learning process. About 16% only think that the learning process can go its way without the need of exploring the students' learning styles. The results of question 12 indicate that 52% of the respondents agree that implementing

such approaches can help EFL learners in becoming competent in both skills, while about 28% of the respondents find that using these approaches may not be necessary for becoming competent EFL learners in both speaking and academic writing. Surprisingly, about 20% of the respondents preferred to be neutral. One of the highest percentages of respondents (88%) is achieved in agreeing that anxiety of making mistakes affects the competency level of EFL learners in both academic writing and speaking, while no respondent showed any degree of disagreement. In question 14, all respondents (100%) agreed that grammar is essential for being competent in academic writing. Also, the same percentage is obtained in results of question 15.

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Table 6 - Teachers' responses to the questionnaire

Question	strongly disagree		Disagree		neutral		agree		strongly agree	
1	1	4%	7	28%	3	12%	7	28%	7	28%
2	4	16%	7	28%	8	32%	5	20%	1	4%
3	3	12%	7	28%	3	12%	5	20%	7	28%
4	7	28%	5	20%	0	0%	11	44%	2	8%
5	1	4%	9	36%	8	32%	7	28%	0	0%
6	10	40%	9	36%	1	4%	5	20%	0	0%
7	2	8%	1	4%	1	4%	9	36%	12	48%
8	2	8%	3	12%	1	4%	8	32%	11	44%
9	5	20%	11	44%	2	8%	7	28%	0	0%
10	9	36%	8	32%	0	0%	5	20%	3	12%
11	1	4%	3	12%	0	0%	9	36%	12	48%
12	4	16%	3	12%	5	20%	11	44%	2	8%
13	0	0%	0	0%	3	12%	15	60%	7	28%
14	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	17	68%	8	32%
15	13	52%	12	48%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Chart 2 – Teachers' responses to the questionnaire
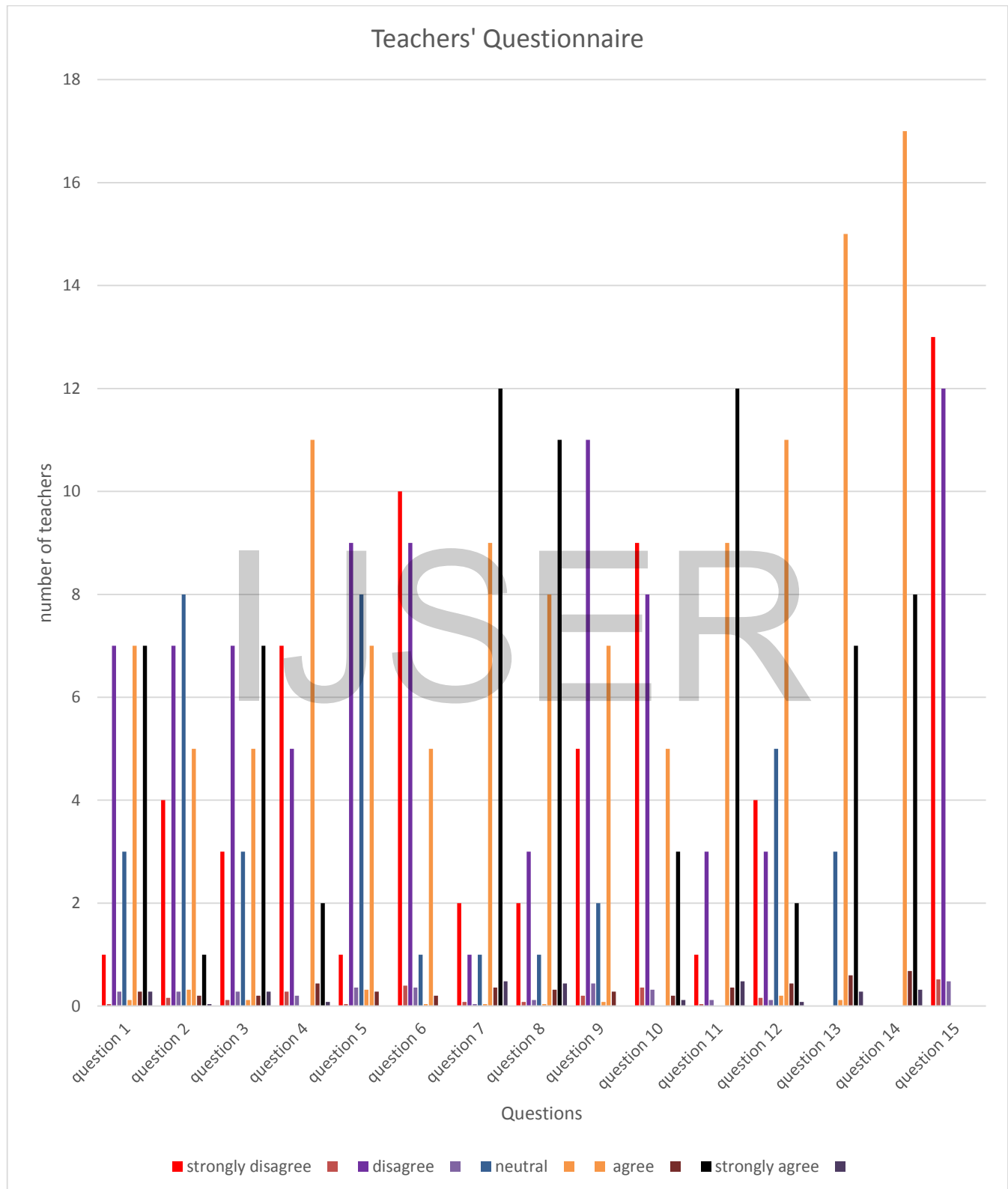
4.3   Teachers' Interviews:

To make the results of the study clearer, an interview was held with ten teachers working at King Saud University and Arab Open University. The interview consisted of 7 open-ended questions to provide the respondents with a chance to express themselves and give detailed answers (see appendix 2). The answer of question 1 show that academic writing is challenging because it involves high accuracy regarding structure and lexicon. It also requires texture and pattern construction. The way EFL teachers handle the receptive skills; reading or listening may be another reason for academic writing difficulty; if these two skills are taught appropriately based on choosing the instructional strategy the teachers may adopt, they will make a significant difference in the students' levels in academic writing and speaking. The results of question 2 show that the majority of the teachers agree with the students who believe that speaking is easier than academic writing. Thus, academic writing requires abiding by the grammar rules and the outline of essays. So, academic writing is a process that needs special preparation regarding grammar, sentence structure and outline. Consequently, the majority of the teachers took positive attitudes towards the third question. Most of the teachers think that they do their job in developing the competency of EFL learners in both speaking and writing. They are trying their best to develop all skills they teach via different techniques. Most of the teachers take care to present the content in a way that could help students achieve the target skills. Regarding the major obstacles Saudi students face in academic writing, a few teachers think that the lack of vocabulary required to achieve the tasks comes top of these obstacles owing to the lack of the exposition to a variety of academic context. Spelling is also an obvious problem as many Saudi students are not good at spellings which indulge their writing. Regarding PBL approach, many teachers see that language classes are flexible when it comes to using any approach as long as the instructions are clear and every student in the PBL groups knows what is required from him or her. Problem based approach is grand because it activates critical thinking and lexicon usage. Regarding question 6, all teachers affirmed that implementing task-based learning approach in an EFL classroom may lead to the competency of the learners in both speaking and academic writing. They also believe that TBL is more suitable for PET

students and above. Question 7 results reflected the affirmative point of view of the majority of the teachers about the significance of grammar for academic writing and speaking. They mentioned that grammar is important but not the most important because teaching grammar without lexicon building is just like building a high building without cement. So, grammar should be regarded as language mechanism not just presented rules.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Based on the findings of the questionnaire and interviews held with students and teachers, this is the time to discuss whether they align with, or differ from the hypothesis of this research. The hypothesis of this study states that there is a real gap between the academic writing outcomes and oral fluency among the university students in Saudi Arabia.

Consistent with the literature, the findings of the study affirm the hypothesis which states that there is a gap between the outcomes of learning speaking and academic writing among EFL learners at Saudi universities. The study proves that the majority of EFL learners at Saudi universities suffer from the incompetence of academic writing which leads by turn to inability in doing academic research or even writing an article. The study discusses a new gap in teaching English to speakers of other languages. It also suggests solutions derived from the theories, approaches and methods recommended by many linguists and educational experts. Finally, this gap can be generalised to other non-native speaking communities to make use of the study's findings and recommendations concerning the cultural differences.

5.1 The significance findings:

This study is significant in different ways. It will help in the following aspects:

Skillful EFL teachers need to develop an acceptable language competency in both speaking and academic writing of their EFL learners at the university level in Saudi Arabia. The study sheds light on the active role of teachers in supporting their students to overcome their anxiety towards academic writing. Besides, the students themselves need to be aware of their learning styles to meet their pedagogical aims. This kind of development could allow the Saudi EFL learners to meet the increasing demand for job hunters, researchers or postgraduate students who are competent in English speaking as well as academic writing. Moreover, this study is believed to help in changing the traditional ways teachers are using to deal with academic writing and speaking and substitute these techniques with more efficient ways depending on the latest approaches and methods of teaching English as a foreign language. Also, the attitude towards learning the

academic writing and speaking skills could affect the learning process either positively or negatively. Finally, motivation towards learning proved to be of vital importance in developing the EFL learners' skills in English.

5.2 Theoretical implications of research outcomes:

Based on the results obtained from the questionnaire which was distributed to 50 EFL university students and 25 teachers in two well-known Saudi Arabian universities followed by an interview with 10 EFL teachers, most of the results were expected, aligned with the research question and the hypothesis of this study. There is an apparent challenge and learning resistance towards academic English acquisition, and that may lead to the incompetency in academic writing compared to speaking fluency among the students in Saudi universities. However, the findings of the study alone should not be taken as a proof for the existence of a real gap between academic writing and speaking. This research area has not been discussed on a large scale, and it needs to have more research studies in the future.

The findings show that the majority of the students took a positive attitude towards learning to speak English fluently and how important it is for the good of their careers. This positive attitude reflected their real feelings towards a skill they claim is the most important for every non-native speaker to master. Also, they believed that communication could be achieved via speaking and writing, but mostly via speaking. By adopting this point of view, the EFL learners agreed with Newman and Horowitz, (2017) when they noted that the written text is only an imperfect representation of a possible spoken utterance. Also, more than half of the teachers participated in the questionnaire agreed with the students in their claims about the importance of speaking. However, the other portion of teachers noted that speaking is as important as other English language skills, so they should be integrated to lead to excellent EFL learners' performance. Regarding the role of teachers in enhancing the competency of EFL students at speaking, there was a clear debate since almost half of the students put the blame only on teachers. They declared that teachers need to exert more effort as facilitators and monitors and not only be lecturers pouring the information without

considering the individual differences of learners. This type of teacher-based instruction has led to the incompetence of most EFL learners in English because the students have not got the opportunity to practice English. On the other side, for a few number of students, teachers appeared to be perfect in dealing with EFL learners using all techniques, methods and approaches they can to create a competent EFL learner. These two different attitudes agreed with the claims of Sougari, Sifakis, (2007) that teachers' insights of their professional roles have an extraordinary power on the learning and attainment of their students. Surprisingly, over three-quarters of the teachers participated in the questionnaire noted that teachers do not do their best in using the most recent techniques, approaches and methods of teaching speaking in their EFL classroom. However, the results achieved in the speaking classes used to be impressive. Taking this positive attitude towards learning/ teaching speaking English, the majority of participants in this study generalised the idea that speaking English is easier than other skills especially the productive ones. The interviews held with a few teachers also proved that the university students in Saudi Arabia prefer to learn to speak English than to do academic writing, and this may be clearer in the next part of the discussion. One of the most widely- spread ideas among EFL learners in Saudi Arabia is the superpower of the native teacher to enhance their oral fluency. This idea was revealed as a belief among the sample selected in this study when the majority of the students expressed their agreement to this point of view while a remarkable number of the students was against it. So, there was a debate about the significance of being a native speaker to achieve better fluency results with EFL students. Many students took the side of giving a special position to the native teacher as the only reliable source of language. While the majority of the teachers agreed with Ferguson, (1983) when he noted that the mystery of native speaker needs to be deleted from the linguists' and scholars' research and minds as well. Chomsky, (1985) also agreed with this point of view when he stated that the difference between "non-native" and "native" speaker is useless. Perhaps this attitude was taken by the teachers in this sample because all of them were non-native speakers of English.

5.3 Attitudes and EFL acquisition

By demonstrating the results of the second section of the questionnaire, it seems clear that a vast number of the participants see academic writing as a difficult skill to master. In like manner, as a skill needed by specific categories of learners, the academic writing appeared to be very challenging to those who are obliged to study it for professional and research purposes. In the same fashion, some teachers agreed with Ur (2013) that learning academic writing needs more effort and time. Such kind of demand emerges from the fact that academic writing needs to be integrated with learning standard grammatical rules, punctuation and formal vocabulary which makes it more demanding. However, learning academic writing in the university classrooms keeps its importance as a distinct skill which deserves to be practised well by the EFL students.

5.4 Recommended methods and approaches:

Teaching methodologies need to include a variety of activities such as problem-solving, role-play, games and songs to help the learners to earn different experiences that enable them to be competent EFL learners. Consequently, there are methods and approaches discussed in the study which proved to have a positive influence on doing well in academic writing. For example, problem-based learning and task-based learning were seen by many of the respondents to be adequate to the EFL classroom at the university level in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, many teachers affirmed that these approaches and methods always have been significant in developing the level of competence in academic writing as well as oral fluency. However, these procedures are not often used by teachers. So, the students who participated in this study used that against the teachers to prove that teachers need to exert more effort in the classroom, use appropriate approaches to help learners to be competent in all English language skills especially academic writing which represents a challenging one to them.

To have a balance between academic writing skill and oral fluency EFL learners need to realise the real problems which caused the gap between both skills at the university level.

5.5 Problems and suggested solutions:

Many challenges are facing the EFL learners at the university level in Saudi Arabia. Most of these challenges are related to academic writing while speaking and oral fluency appear to be less problematic. Firstly, the lack of self-management skills seems to be one of the most observed problems in the EFL classrooms at the university level in Saudi Arabia. In other words, the students find it challenging to complete academic performances. Besides, they have difficulty in identifying the research requirements. Furthermore, the failure to follow instructions of the teachers regarding the principal steps of doing academic writing represents the second major problem which leads to the EFL learners' incompetence at academic writing and speaking. These two problems need cooperation between teachers and students to overcome. One significant problem which appeared through the discussion with the teachers is the lack of a strategy for the composition process among the students. Likewise, lack of motivation was seen by most of the teachers participated in the interview as the major problem with learning any skill. This view is supported by the study conducted by Gardner and Lambert (1959) which related the competence in EFL to high motivation to learn. Besides, poor organisation, ineffective proofreading and misunderstanding teachers' criticisms are believed to make the process of learning more challenging to EFL learners at all levels especially at the university level.

5.6 An analysis of the teacher's role in SLA:

Based on the results of this study, teachers, regardless of being native or non-native, need to take specific steps to fill in the gap between the oral fluency of their learners and the academic writing. According to Al-Nasser, (2015), the training of teachers makes the process of teaching more effective and learning fascinating. Similarly, Britten, cited in Murdoch, (1994) stated that teachers must be adequately trained to achieve their goals in developing the skills of the learners. Teacher training includes the ability to learn the students' problems and try hard to address them. Also, teachers need to use the latest methods and approaches that enable the students to practice English interestingly. For example, using task-based learning

and problem-based learning approaches creates an interactive environment in the classroom which makes the process of learning more competitive and interesting. Moreover, such approaches change the status of the learning process from teacher-based learning to student-based learning which raises the sense of rapport between the learners and their teacher. Equally, they give the learners the chance to express themselves and enhance their self-confidence in producing spoken and written language. Teachers need to know "the characteristics of the context in which they work" (Murray and Christison, 2011: xiv). Identically, they need to be aware of the nature of their learners, and the policies and expectations of their society. To help the learners to be competent at academic writing aligned with fluency in speaking English, teachers need to be able to create the appropriate materials and activities for the classroom. Comparatively, they are supposed to engage the learners in conversations and to motivate them "to read and write texts for different purposes" (ibid). To achieve this, teachers need to know how to "blend an understanding of learners, language, and language learning with knowledge of their content goals and how to achieve those goals" (ibid). According to Murray and Christison, (2011), teachers need to follow three major phases of teaching: planning, instructing, and assessing. Firstly, during the planning phase, teachers need to assess their learners' previous knowledge and what they need to learn to grasp their successful course goals. Secondly, during the instruction phase, teachers regularly assess their learners' acquisition of the language. Thirdly, during the assessment phase, teachers are frequently going through instructional goals to decide if their learners have accomplished them. In case of not achieving the instructional objectives, teachers also need to know the reasons, and they need to plan for reconsideration of the procedures used in this phase. The teacher needs to be concerned with how to develop language acquisition of the learners and motivate them to be competent academic writers as well as fluent speakers of English. "This stem from the view that teaching is a thinking, reasoning, and sociocultural activity in which teachers make decisions based on the context of their classrooms" (Murray and Christison, 2011: xv).

5.7 Motivation and competency at Academic writing and speaking:

The findings of the study revealed that the EFL learners in Saudi universities always suffered from the lack of motivation to write essays or long academic assignments. On the other side, they showed great interest in practicing speaking without any anxiety. The reason behind this disagreement in attitudes may lie in the absence of motivation towards one component of the language while focusing on another. There are many primary facets which motivate any learner to learn a second language and to master its integrated skills. First, EFL learners need to have the desire to achieve success in their academic and professional life to be motivated to master academic writing as well as speaking. To accomplish this, they need to compel to language learning strategies and to have the belief that learning a language is a challenging process. So, they need to exert more effort to achieve their goal of having a balance between academic writing and speaking.

5.8 Effective learners and the gap bridging:

Based on the findings of the study, it seems clear that effective EFL learners have faster talent and desire for learning the English language than others. Applying this to academic writing, some learners at Saudi universities may find themselves ineffective towards doing academic writing. To avoid such a problem, teachers need to help their learners to follow specific steps to be more efficient towards academic writing as well as speaking. Thus they can achieve the required balance between academic writing and speaking skill. First, EFL learners need to come across using the language inside and outside the classroom in different contexts. Second, they need to read more in English to get enough vocabulary required for writing an essay or an article. Third, EFL students need to organise information and data collected like new vocabulary, literary expressions in a separate notebook to be used in academic writing as well as conversations. Finally, they need to know that all components and skills of English language are of the same importance. This idea could help them to focus on academic writing the way they do to other language skills.

5.9 limitations and future research

The study suffered from three limitations which may have influenced the empirical outcomes of the study and need to be avoided in the future research studies; firstly, the absence of the female students' role in the study may have affected the adequacy of the results. Although, the female students number was less than the male students in both the two universities used in the study, the study still needs their participation since they form almost half of the Saudi society and their opinions are significant for the scientific and literary research. Secondly, the major of the students in both King Saud University and Arab Open University was not English language. The results would be more adequate if they were attained by students at the English Language Department as they study English as their major and know about strategies and approaches of English learning. Moreover, studying English for four years should have given them the opportunity to study Academic English more than other students at different departments. Thirdly, the shortage of references is a major limitation which might have affected the critical writing of a few parts of the study. Therefore, it is necessary for the researcher to find out the research topic which could have the appropriate references. Thus, the researcher could achieve a satisfactory critical research.

Nunan, (1999:172-3), states that many learners seem unconscious of several learning strategies. Furthermore, they may be unaware of the learning strategies that work best for them. This view could be accurate for all language skills, but it is essential to take into consideration the productive skills especially academic writing and speaking. Bringing them into account would suggest that there is a crucial need to support learners to learn academic writing conventions and rules. In other words, learners need to be exposed to various strategies and to have the opportunity to try them to select the most appropriate for their learning preferences. Afterwards. These procedures could initiate higher motivation to learn to write academically. Besides, the teachers need to present grammar and structure to the EFL learners in a way that supports the pedagogical side and help them to improve their academic writing and speaking skills. Teachers also need to take their responsibility for guiding the learners to the appropriate techniques which may lead them to be competent in both skills. Finally, implementing active learning in the EFL classroom

could be more effective than passive learning, and student-set goals are more likely to be achieved than

instructor-imposed goals.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Although this study took place in an Arabic- speaking community, the results revealed that speaking English is not the primary problem of university students in Saudi Arabia, but the real problem is that many of the university students in Saudi Arabia are ill-equipped to write efficiently as desired. Thus, the gap discussed in this study reflects a real problem which faces a significant portion of the students in Saudi Arabian universities. The differences between writing and speaking were addressed by many studies before. However, in this study, it was significant to address the academic writing status compared to speaking among the students at Saudi universities. The findings of the study indicate that the gap between the two skills may affect the university students' career in an age when English represents the most officially used language all over the world. The study was exposed to very crucial points need to be taken care of by linguists, teachers, and students to cooperate in bridging and filling in this gap. Firstly, they need to investigate the causes of this gap which are related to teachers, students, curriculum and cultural background of the society. Secondly, there are some ideas and views which this study proved they are not accurate and there is a need to be corrected. For example, the idea of the competence of the native speaking teachers compared to non-native teachers was found not accurate according to this study. So, the judgement of the professional teacher has different measures other than being a native speaker of English. For example, the EFL teachers could be judged according to their educational level, the latest methods and approaches they use, the rapport created between them and their students, the time they talk in the classroom and the continuous self-assessment. All of these elements are believed to represent the most necessary criteria of an English teacher.

To address the gap discussed in the study, teachers and students need to follow specific steps that may lead them to achieve better results in bridging this gap. First of all, teachers need to motivate their students to develop their academic writing according to the following stages: Firstly, learners need to plan for their writing tasks. Secondly, they need to read critically and draw appropriate material from academic texts to support their academic writing. Thirdly, learners need to be critical and to set the argument and confirm

their claims by logical discussion and argument. Also, EFL learners at the university stage need to write clear and correct sentences, use correct grammatical structures and not to ignore punctuation. The academic argument needs to be written logically and to offer indications that support the intellectual situation and to attain conclusions.

Another critical point stated in the digest created by The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) (2001) is that the integrated-skill approach increases the exposure of authentic language for English language learners and contests them to interact naturally in the language. This study also proposes that the EFL learners need to be exposed to integrated English skills at the EFL classroom so that they could interact with people through their creative academic and spoken performances. Furthermore, the study of integrated skills gives the teachers the opportunity to assess their learners in more than one skill simultaneously. One of the significant findings of this study is the need to increase the learners' autonomy and motivation for performing future tasks by supporting them to face the challenges of both skills. The implementation of task-based learning and problem- based learning appeared to have a positive influence on the enhancement of speaking skill as well as academic writing.

The research could contribute new insights which may add new values to the research area. For example, this paper has presented an overview of the debate between academic writing acquisition and oral fluency which seems more relevant to EFL learners at Saudi universities. The research also urges academic scholars to reach out a solution for the research gap. The study carried some suggestions for both university teachers and academic scholars to consider. Based on the findings of the study, teachers need to concentrate on the academic writing classes and motivate the learners to overcome the reluctance in writing. This could happen by introducing authentic texts and new vocabularies to the classroom. In addition, teachers also need to develop the EFL learners' grammar and teach them how to use correct structures in their writings. Thus, teachers need to take up the responsibility of doing academic writing as relevant as oral fluency for EFL learners at Saudi universities. Secondly, teachers need to design more task-based activities (TBL) and

problem- based activities (PBL) of both academic writing and speaking and try to integrate both skills in the same lesson.

This step implies implementing task-based learning (TBL) approach and problem- based learning(PBL) approach in a wide range in the EFL classroom to turn the EFL class into a more interactive one. On the other hand, academic scholars also need to participate in making a balance between academic writing and speaking by introducing more critical papers which investigates the gap from different sides.

6.1 Recommendations of the study

The study sets out a clear and definite need for future research in many areas related to the acquisition of English as a foreign language. The research is likely to be fully comprehended by the readers. The study apparently states that productive skills of English language correlate together and that in the existing literature academic writing needs to be integrated with speaking to produce a blend of accurate and fluent English learners. Thus, it is recommended that EFL researchers embrace the reproaches in the study that affirm that EFL methods and approaches need to be more efficiently used for EFL learners. Consequently, such methods and approaches need to be modified and made culturally and linguistically appropriate for the EFL learners. Also, researchers need to embrace the role of the university EFL teacher in developing the academic writing for EFL undergraduate and postgraduate students especially for the students of the different majors other than English as a foreign language(EFL). In addition, the participation of female EFL learners should be taken into consideration for the future research so as to attain more relevant results. This can happen more easily now since there is a remarkable change in the attitude of Saudi society towards the role of women in all fields including academic and scientific research. So, the change can happen by discussing the value of EFL female learners taking part in the academic research with the officials at the Ministry of Education and the presidents of the universities in Saudi Arabia. Also, the course books need to have the required balance and integration between all English language skills. This means that the choice

may depend on realizing the learning styles of Saudi students which, according to this study, leads to more competent English language speakers as well as academic writing professionals.

Finally, based on the findings of the study, the attitude of EFL learners towards academic writing proved to be very significant in learning any language skill. For this reason, EFL teachers need to motivate their students to turn their negative attitude towards academic writing to be a positive one. Thus, they can create the required balance and integration between academic writing and speaking skill which represent the core of this study. This improvement and change in attitude could happen by following the strategies and techniques discussed in the study.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Students' and teachers' Questionnaire

1= Strongly disagree   2= Disagree   3= Neutral   4= Agree   5= Strongly agree

	Section 1: attitudes towards speaking skill:
1	Speaking is the most important skill of English so I care about studying/ teaching it more than other skills.
2	Speaking methods used by teachers in the classroom are sufficient for EFL learners to be fluent speakers of English.
3	It is an urgent need to be a native-like speaker of English to get a job or to create your career.
4	Learning/ teaching speaking is not as difficult as academic writing.
5	Native teachers achieve better fluency results with their students than non-native teachers.

	Section 2: attitudes towards academic writing:
6	Academic writing is of no use to university students since it does not add a lot to them.

7	Learning academic writing needs more effort from the students as well as the teachers.
8	Being good writers will help EFL learners to do well academically.
9	Writing an essay is much more comfortable than participating in a conversation with EFL students.
10	Learners enjoy writing challenging assignments.

Section 3: Methods and approaches role in integrating both speaking and academic writing:	
11	Teachers should know the learning styles of the learners to help them to achieve good results in both academic writing and speaking.
12	Competency in academic writing, as well as speaking fluently, can be achieved together by using task-based activities and problem-based procedures in the classroom.
13	The anxiety of making mistakes in academic writing and speaking cause competency problems.
14	Grammar competency is essential for academic writing competency.
15	Motivation is not essential for learning academic writing, but it is in speaking.

<u>Appendix 2</u>

<u>Teachers` interview</u>

1- Do you think academic writing is difficult for university students? Why?

2- Do you think speaking is easier than academic writing for university students? Why?

3- Do the teachers do their job in developing the competency of EFL learners in both speaking and writing?

4- What (in your opinion) are the significant obstacles to the competency of Saudi students in Academic writing?

5- Is problem- based learning an appropriate approach to use in teaching speaking and academic writing or it is valid only for math teaching?

6- Do you believe that implementing task-based learning in the EFL classrooms will lead to the competency of the EFL learners in both speaking and academic writing?

7- Do you think grammar is as vital for speaking as it is for academic writing?

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