STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN WRITTEN EXPRESSION
IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF ENGLISH AND ARABIC
AT AL-QUDS UNIVERSITY

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Abstract:

This study aims to identify the nature of students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University. It also aims to identify the impact of each of the variables gender, level, department and achievement on the degree of students' writing difficulties in both departments. To achieve the objective of the study, a questionnaire was designed comprising 32 items applied to the study sample which consisted of 128 students from the Departments of Arabic and English at Al-Quds University in Palestine. The results of the study showed that students' difficulties in written expression were fain in degree; they also revealed statistically significant differences in the averages of students' difficulties in written expression due to gender in favor of females, and the presence of statistically significant differences in the averages of the difficulties in written expression due to level, and in favor of third and fourth year students; there were also statistically significant differences in the averages due to department and in favor of the Department of Arabic. The results of the study showed that there were no statistically significant differences in the averages of the difficulties of written expression due to level of achievement. Based on the results of the study, the researchers recommended the need to hold language activities in class, such as reading and writing articles and short stories, which overuse words and vocabulary that may help to develop students' written expression, and there is a need to instate a course for written expression on the graduation plans of the above-

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mentioned departments, and the importance of taking into account students' tendencies when choosing topics that include written expression.

Keywords: students' difficulties, written expression, Departments of English and Arabic, Al-Quds University

1. Introduction

Language is a means of communication and interaction between individuals and groups; it is also a community tool for the transfer of heritage from one generation to another.

What increases the importance of any language is that it directly affects the learning of other subjects. Without mastering the basic skills of any language, it is difficult to achieve the required progress in these materials or comprehend them (Shehata, 1995). The aim of language teaching in basic education is to provide students with the basic skills and to develop the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. It also aims to help students acquire the right habits and sound trends to satisfy their needs and preferences through linguistic communication in different situations. Language makes it possible for the transfer of ideas and the development of learners' tendency to read; it even enables them to express what goes on in their minds and helps them use and employ them and contribute to deepening the understanding and refinement of behavior, and it instills positive values in order to build personal decency. It is through human language that one can express to others his/her thoughts. Expression is the highest goal that teachers must be careful of to enable students to practice it; for it is the fruit and the final outcome of teaching all languages.

The rest of the branches are tributaries to a student, gushing his/her pillars and supports his/her construction. Reading is considered the material for the expression of ideas and mastering the grammar of the language, while literature is the source that enriches and nourishes it and dictation is the immune for drawing and writing errors, while the style is the beauty of painting and splendor.

. The significance of expression is considered important as it is a means of the individual to communicate with others, it is through expression that a person can understand what he/she wants, and at the same time understands what is required of him/her. This contact would not be useful if it is not authentic and accurate. Accuracy depends on the quality and authenticity of expression, the clarity of the linguistic reception and the remote response from ambiguity and confusion.

Expression is the pillar of the individual's personality in achieving subjectivity and interaction with others. The inability to express ideas has a great impact on

students and causes their failure and loss of self-esteem, and may be the reason of the delay of social and intellectual development (Soman, 2013).

It is noted that a large number of students at various stages suffer from an apparent weakness in speech, both oral and written. If one speaks in a correct language, the signs of fatigue in principalities emerge on his language and may suddenly stop by to unload what he wants to say. Or, perhaps resorts to the vernacular, or completes what he failed to complete in standard Arabic or English, and if students write about a subject, one would find their compositions faulty and replete with grammatical and spelling errors. Therefore, this study aims to identify the nature of students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University. It also aims to identify the impact of each of the variables gender, level, department and achievement on the degree of students' writing difficulties in both departments.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Expression is the grandest goal that educated people should possess because it is the fruit and the final outcome of teaching all languages; therefore, there is a need to build a generation capable of expressing what is going on in its thought and consciousness, easily and conveniently. The researchers have noticed a weakness in the written expression among the students of the Departments of English and Arabic, which formed an incentive to discuss this problem.

1.2 Questions of the Study

The study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What is the degree of students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University?
2. Do the averages in students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University vary due to gender, academic level, department, and level of achievement?

1.3 Hypotheses of the Study

To answer the second question, it was converted into the following null hypotheses:

A.   First Null Hypotheses:

There were no statistically significant differences at the level of significance $(0.05 \geq \alpha)$ in the arithmetic mean scores of students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University due to gender.

B.   Second Null Hypotheses:

There were no statistically significant differences at the level of significance $(0.05 \geq \alpha)$ in the arithmetic mean scores of students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University due to academic level.

C.   Third Null Hypotheses:

There were no statistically significant differences at the level of significance $(0.05 \geq \alpha)$ in the arithmetic mean scores of students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University due to department.

D.   Fourth Null Hypotheses:

There were no statistically significant differences at the level of significance $(0.05 \geq \alpha)$ in the arithmetic mean scores of students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University due to level of achievement.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to identify students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at the Al-Quds University. It also aims to offer some suggestions on how to improve students' written expression.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The importance of the study lies in its attempt to identify students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University, which may draw the attention of faculty members in both departments towards taking more interest in written expression, and focus on or emphasize it.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the following:

1. Human limitations: This study was applied to a sample of students from the Departments of Arabic and English registered in the second semester of the academic year 2015-2016.

2. Temporal limitations: The study was carried out in the second semester of the academic year 2015-2016.

3. Spatial limitations: This study was limited only to the students in the Departments of Arabic and English at Al-Quds University.

4. Conceptual limitations: the terms contained in the study.

5. Procedural limitations: Statistical methods adopted by the researchers in the data processing, the study sample and tools and the method of their validity and reliability.

2. Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Expression in language: it is readability and the ability to express what is going on in the mind, and the tongue expresses the mind (Ibn Manzour, 1997). Expression has many idiomatic definitions; it was defined by Soman (2013) that it is a disclosure of the human tongue or pen for his/her thoughts, feelings and purposes in a proper language, and it is the goal of learning the language; it is the goal that aims to grasp all the Arabic language subjects and seek to recite them.

As defined by Aldulaimi and Alwaeli (2003), expression is that designation and disclosure of what beats in the same human thoughts and feelings, and the thoughts and feelings are of course understandable to others. Expression, at the school level, is that work which is going on according to an integrated plan to get the student to the level that he/she can translate his thoughts, feelings, observations and experiences orally and in writing in accordance with sound and intellectual format. Eid (2011) defined it as a disclosure of one's talking or writing about the inner feelings, thoughts and senses in sound words and grammatically correct statements.

Written expression: it is through writing, and its phase begins with the beginning of the fourth grade, and on a limited scale, then the expansion of its use and training of students on it begin after the fourth grade, where students can gradually express their thoughts in writing, and whenever the student progresses and moves to another grade, his/her abilities to speak develop. Its fields are: writing articles, essays, letters, memos and thoughts (Abu Ras, 2008).

Written expression is one of the most important activities in linguistic patterns' because it is a means of communication between individuals, and it facilitates the process of thinking and self-expression. It is also a tool of preserving human culture and heritage; moreover, it enables individuals to benefit from the product of the human mind, and transfer and develop it (Almullah & Almuaw'a, 1997).

Written expression brings benefits which oral expression doesn't, because of its briefness with regard to the dimensions of time and space, the easiness of saving it, and the effectiveness of its continuation. It enables one to express and revise his thoughts in an organized way before writing and publishing them in an orderly fashion, and this contact of ideas would be useful, only if it is true and accurate, as it depends on the quality and authenticity of expression and the clarity of reception of the linguistic and remote responses for ambiguity or confusion. Correct expression is essential in various grades. Expression is of great importance in the life of the individual and society alike, and it draws its significance in many ways; the most important are: it features among the branches of the language; while the rest of the branches, are means of specific help,

it also helps in solving individual and social problems through discussion and exchange of views (Abu-Moghli, 2001).

Teaching written expression seeks to enable learners to express their needs, feelings, experiences and observations in correct terms and provides them with the necessary words and structures to add to their language earnings, use it in talking and writing, give the learner a set of values, knowledge, ideas and sound trends, train him/her on how to arrange ideas and put them in logical sequence, give it a plenty of power and influence on the listener and the reader, prepare learners to face various life situations that require the eloquence of tongue and the ability to improvise to live in the community effectively, strengthens their language and their development and enables them to properly express their thoughts and psychological needs orally and in writing (Ashour & Alhawamdeh, 2014).

In terms of performance, expression can be divided as:

1. Oral Expression: It is through oral conversation, which was the first means of man's expression before the invention of writing, this type of expression is used at all the stages of education, including the lower and the upper.

However, the use of oral expression in the lower levels of education hardly can be said to be the prevailing way used by young students whose linguistic abilities have not been completed in writing, and they will have the ability to master oral expression more than the written one, taking into account what can be exposed; some of the effects may hinder them from oral expression such as fear, shame and speech language pathology.

2. Written Expression: It is by writing, where the student jots down his/her expression in writing. Its level of performance is determined by the level the students are at, because of that, students in primary classes are not expected be able to write good and successful expressions on the topics they are learning, because their abilities are less than that. The phase of written expression is at the beginning of the primary fourth grade, but on a limited range of sentences with the teachers helping students to write by raising some questions that require them to answer them in order to know the elements of the topic the teacher wants them to write about (Aldarawish, 1997).

In terms of use, expression can be divided as follows:

1. Functional Expression: It is the expression that leads to a special function in the life of the individual and the group, like understanding and comprehensibility. Its areas of use are many such as conversation between people, writing letters, telegrams and various calls and writing notes, reports, memos, and other signs and instructions that directs people for whatever purpose. Functional expression is done either orally or in writing.

2. Creative Expression: Its purpose is the expression of ideas and psychological feelings and transferring them to others in an elevated literary style in order to influence the hearts of readers and listeners; it also aims to reach the degree of understanding them to the level of almost approaching the level of excitement. If functional expression meets the requirements of life and physical and social affairs, creative expression helps the student to express his/her feelings in a way that reflects and highlights his/her his personality (Ashour & Alhawamdeh, 2014).

Methods of Teaching Written Expression and its Fields:

1. The story and its importance in education: The story is considered as one of the best ways to train students to express themselves; because it instinctually draws them to it, and they do not get bored hearing it at any time, but it is conditional on achieving the goal more than exciting interest. Perhaps the fantasy element is one of the elements of thrill, especially for children, and to be comic is what excites new hearers, and to be appropriate for students in terms of idea and language, to be meaningful intellectual or social or so, and that is appropriate to students in terms of length and shortness, that its narration to students should not last more than five minutes (Soman, 2013).

2. Free expression: It is an interview with the students upon their freedom and choice for something they instinctually realize at home, school or street, or their talk about the news delivered by them in the classroom, as a conversation or a story, followed by discussions involving the community or a conversation in the form of questions directed by the children and the teacher to his story so as to answer them. The teacher may participate in spreading news among his/her students, snapped so as to satisfy the needs and tendencies of childhood. It has been observed that students tend to this kind of expression and accept it because it fits them in the various stages of education. In teaching free expression, the teacher follows the following steps:

A.   Introducing the lesson through linking students' experiences or explaining to them what is required of it.

B.   Consulting students by asking different questions about the subject of expression.

C.   Encouraging students to play the role of the teacher by asking each other questions or by posing the questions to their teacher.

D.   Training students on how to organize their conversation about the topic under discussion through talking about it chronologically.

Third: Teaching different subjects

A.   At the main stage, this can be done in the form of questions the teacher addresses or poses in different forms about the topic so that students can answer them, and the teacher behaves in a way that makes students' answers vary. The subject of expression

can be a specific description about an image, and may be a kind of training on how to write a story or news by conducting activities carried out by the students.

B.   At the primary and upper stages, the teaching of expression goes through the following: Booting, which increases the motivation of students towards the subject, as well as it encourages all students to participate in class discussion. The eloquence of the teacher and his/her good behavior may also be a factor that positively affects the expression of students.

C.   Posing a range of questions to students about the subject and receiving answers and talking about the subject individually and in pairs is of great importance (Ashour & Alhawamdeh, 2014).

Characteristics of Good Expression: Vitality which means that the expression of feelings and self-motivation is spontaneous and stems from the self, and its themes are derived from reality, and the clarity of the subject matter, and avoiding affectation that is to utter it freely. It does not comply with the methods imposed, and the academic honesty by giving credit to the original authors and avoiding plagiarism while quoting, and influence, which means attracting the listener or reader to the subject of expression (Eid, 2011).

The Correction of Written Expression:
According to educational foundations, a student should recognize his/her mistakes by himself/herself; usually errors in expression are abound, both in spelling or grammar or linguistic or stylistic patterns, so linguists and educators discussed the issue of correct speech and agreed not to correct all the errors so that students do not get frustrated, but they did not agree on one way, since there are several ways to correct the error in written expression (Abu-Alhija, 2007).

A.   Immediate Correction: It is done through the participation of the student with his teacher in reading the subject matter; here the teacher stops the student when making a mistake, like correcting a student's notebook in front of him/her, and this is the best method (Eid, 2011).

B.   Correction by Using Symbols: It is a method that develops students' mental activity and the search for their own errors. The teacher puts red symbols under the mistakes, without correcting them and he/she leaves students to think to know the errors, but if one of them fails to recognize the errors, the teacher may help him/her (Abu-Moghli, 2001).

C.   Writing the correct word above the mistake: This method is used with the students at the primary level (Zafer & Alhamadi, 1984).

D.   Way of reciprocity: the teacher benefits from peer teaching; he/she excites students to learn, where each pupil corrects the mistakes of his colleague, and that his

colleague corrects him/her by guiding him/her to a general framework for the correction (Fadlallah, 1998).

Ashour and Almiqdadi (2009) revealed some of the causes for students' weakness in written expression, including teaching written expression separately from the teaching materials given to the student; according to them, teachers do not use appropriate and feasible implementation strategies, and they do not allocate enough time to teach written expression. Teachers alienate students from the subject because of the lack of adequate familiarity with it; the selection of subjects far from the world of the students (reality) and what they love, and sometimes frustrating students as a result of the way the teacher evaluates their writings.

To help students overcome these problems, teachers have to take more interest in several things, such as building a strong foundation of oral language because writing is closely associated with them, paying attention to what is written by students more than paying attention to his/her linguistic accuracy (grammatical and spelling mistakes), paying attention to the process of writing itself and its various stages, helping students to improve their writing skills through multiple drafts and revision, and evaluating the writing individually and collectively, for the teacher has to respect what is written by the student and provide him/her with positive feedback.

2.2 Previous Studies

Alziq (2014) conducted a study that aimed to investigate the effect of using cartoon networks in developing the linguistic expression skills of primary fourth grade students in Gaza. The researcher followed the experimental method. The study population consisted of all primary fourth grade students in UNRWA refugee schools in the central province of Gaza, and the population consisted of 2399 students, while the sample consisted of 72 fourth grade male students from Deir al-Balah Elementary School has been chosen randomly. To achieve the objectives of the study, an animation program has been used in teaching linguistic expressions and was applied to the experimental group of 38 students, and the rest of the sample (34) students were taught in the traditional way. A written expression test was prepared by the researcher, and a note card has been used as well. After applying the study, it was realized that the proposed program had a tremendous effect in developing students' linguistic expression skills, and the researcher recommended the use of "education through animation," and the inclusion of the term in the curriculum to teach through animation themes, as well as the dissemination of teaching through animation among teachers.

Alnajjar (2004) aimed to investigate the efficiency of a proposed teaching program to develop some of the creative written expression skills of tenth grade students in the governorate of Khan Younis in Gaza. The researcher prepared a list of the areas of creative written expression, and a second list of written activities included

in each area, and a third list of the skills contained in each area, then the researcher prepared the proposed program. The study sample consisted of 160 male and female students, the study found that the presence of both differences of male and female students separately, or for all respondents, and it was in favor of the application of the post test. The results also showed the lack of the impact of gender on the application of the written expression test.

While the study of Dassah (2013) aimed to determine the educational difficulties in teaching Arabic as seen by basic classes in Hebron District. The study sample consisted of 428 males, equivalent to (20%) of Arabic language teachers in Hebron in its three directorates, was chosen randomly, a questionnaire which included 51 statements was designed in four axes paragraphs: teacher, learner, learning environment and content of education. This study revealed that the degree of difficulty faced by teachers in the basic stage is moderate and the mean reached 3.37, and it was found that there were no differences between male and female teachers in the district due to years of experience and specialization, the differences are only in favor of the males over females. Among the most prominent difficulties exhibited by the results of the study were that the large number of students in the classroom, and the lack of follow-up by the parents, and the most important recommendations made by the researcher were that the school administration should work to organize the distribution of students within classrooms to commensurate with the available resources.

Alhallaq and Alhashimi also conducted a study in 2011 that aimed to investigate the impact of the restrained and unrestrained strategies of written expression in the development of the written expression skills of first grade secondary students in Irbid Governorate. The study sample consisted of 150 male and female students, who were selected intentionally, and the researchers used the list of expressive performance standards developed by them; they adopted them when debugging expressive themes by students, and also they prepared a guide to teach written expression. The results showed that the restrained expression strategy is more effective in the development of performance of expressionists' written skills than of the unrestrained strategy. And that there is no trace of the gender variable in the performance of students in written expression, and there is no interaction between teaching strategies and gender in students' performance at the level of written expression.

The study of Abu-Radwan (2008) aimed to investigate the effect of using a program based on linguistic games on the linguistic styles and skills of oral expression in the development of fourth-grade students in the schools of South Hebron Directorate. The study population consisted of all basic fourth grade students at public schools, and the selection of the sample was intentional and drawn from two public schools which are: Samu' Basic Males School, and Banat Alharamain Basic School. It consisted of four sections, and the number of students was 146 students. The researcher

chose and divided them randomly; the researcher designed an educational program included language games, and applied a pre-test and then a post-test after the implementation of the program on the experimental group. The results indicated a statistically significant difference in the development of linguistic patterns attributable to the teaching of gender and the interaction between them and the presence of statistically significant differences in the development of oral expression skills. The researcher recommended that Arabic language teachers should be enlightened to the importance of using linguistic games, and they should be trained on how to develop and produce them, as well as develop a methodology for teaching the skills of oral expression in the teacher's guide.

Alghabari (2008) studied the effect of a proposed program designed for the teaching of expression on the development of functional expression for secondary school students in the Republic of Yemen. The researcher used the experimental method to achieve the objectives of this study. The study population consisted of all secondary school students in the Republic of Yemen, while the sample consisted of second grade secondary science students in Yemen. To conduct the study, the researcher prepared a list of functional written expression skills, in addition to the list of areas of written expression. Then the researcher prepared the proposed program, as well as a test to measure the degree of students' mastery of written expression skills. The results showed the effectiveness of the proposed program in the development of functional expression of secondary school students.

The study of Abu-Maraq (2007) explored the difficulties facing Arabic language teachers in teaching reading in the basic phase as perceived by the teachers themselves in Hebron. The study sample consisted of 70 male and female teachers who were randomly selected in the first semester of the academic year 2005/2016. For the purpose of the study, a questionnaire that included 30 statements was constructed and composed of five dimensions: academic, intellectual, physical, social and economic. The findings revealed that the degree of the difficulties faced by the teachers of Arabic are high, reaching the mean score of (2.38), and it was found that there were no differences between teachers due to gender or qualification; meanwhile, the results proved that there were statistically significant differences due to experience, and it was in favor of the teachers with short experience.

Alhaddad's (2005) study aimed to measure the degree of the use of operations in written expression (planning, authoring, and reviewing) by tenth grade students in their writings; it also aimed to study the effect of gender in the degree of these students' use of operations of written expression. In order to achieve the goal of the study, a questionnaire was designed consisting of 22 statements, and it was applied to a sample consisting of 403 students, including 191 male and 212 female students from the tenth grade in the second Oman Directorate. The study results showed that the sample of the

students does not employ students' written expression in their writings to a high degree, according to the study tool, these students use planning, authoring, and reviewing moderately. The results also showed that the sample male students excelled female students in the degree of their use of planning, authoring and reviewing.

Shull (2001) analyzed the impact of cooperative learning strategy, which includes the participation of eleventh grade students in the collective review at the level of written expression in Illinois, USA, compared to traditional learning that is teacher-centered, and for that, the researcher conducted this study in order to raise the low level of students' performance in written expression up to a level determined by the board of Education in the state, which showed that half of the students in the States are at a level that is less than the required rate level, and for that, the researcher used the experimental design, pre and posttests that were applied to a sample of 54 students from Romevill School. The sample was divided into two groups; the experimental consisted of 28 students, while the control consisted of 26 students. After conducting the experiment, the results showed the effectiveness of the two methods, with slight differences that did not live up to the level of statistical significance for the experimental group.

Adler's study (2000) was done with a purpose to investigate the impact of language games played by students to develop their creative writing skills. The idea of the study revolves around the expansion of students' link to creative language through association with the context of imagination, through the acts of Vigo Tsky. The research was conducted by offering four courses in creative writing selected in three top public schools in New York. The participants in the research were 4 teachers and 24 students. The results of the study highlighted that each teacher and his/her students have distinguished themselves with introducing writings that sprung from their imagination, and in spite of these differences, however, the results suggested that educational images helped in a big way to find a balance point between the freedom of expression and the grammar, and the workshop course has achieved greater progress with the participants than in the courses taught in the curriculum which was presented routinely, which supports the direction that writing which relies on imagination contributes effectively to the development of the capacities of adolescents' creative writing.

Budhesha (2000) focused on the written expression containing the practice of imagination in the classroom, where students are encouraged to explore the social and political situations, and the situation of others, it also encourages students to demonstrate their knowledge and culture through the creation of imaginary dialogues from others, and drawing characters from the creations of their imagination, which makes students creative in the social and political contexts, which is imagination and creativity material, and thus invite them to see themselves associates and part of the community affecting and affected by it, and cross the limit between them and others

via the imagination, and develop through that the writing skills. The duration of the experiment lasted two years. It included 6 assessment paragraphs included high school students in Miami, USA, using clear criteria and students' performance tests, and teachers who participated in the experiment benefited a lot from it.

Thome (2000) conducted a study that aimed to investigate the effect of assessment in the classroom - using analysis- to develop the speaking and expressing skills of students in a high school with the use of feedback, and the study was done at high schools in Chicago, Illinois, America. To achieve this goal, good writing standards have been identified and students were provided with them in learning and self-evaluation, to help them represent these criteria rather than just present a statement of errors, this trend was found in America in the past twenty-five years, which includes the possibility to increase the empowerment of students in the skill of expression, as the information provided by the continuous and accurate feedback with regard to students' writing abilities, which helped teachers to focus their efforts, and improve learners' writing, and allow them to assess themselves. The study included 83 teachers and 37 students in a variety of conditions in a secondary school in a suburb in Chicago, America, and the quasi-experimental research was based on classroom practice in normal conditions and analysis of writing as a tool to feedback to improve performance. The researcher realized, after the application of the study, that there is a clear improvement at the end of two years of teaching.

Colantone's study (1998) aimed to improve the creative written expression. To achieve this, the researcher conducted a survey which showed the need to improve the creative written expression, and students' interests in it lacked, and the low level of the direction of the students towards it emerged as the survey results supported the teachers' reports which showed a lack of teachers' efforts to allocate adequate time to creative written expression, and thinking of the effectiveness of methods to teach it. The researcher used a list of monitoring skills as a pre and post criterion in the survey, and chose a sample study from three elementary schools in the two regions of the United States. The study sample included pupils from different middle social backgrounds, and it also included black pupils from the low class. The experiment lasted eight weeks, during which he used multiple experiences and strategies and a variety of files and portfolios. The results of the study showed a significant improvement in the study sample's written expression skills, where they became more fluent in speech.

Johns' study (1992) aimed to identify and develop the writing skills among secondary school students. To achieve that, a list of writing skills was prepared and put to a referendum, in order to determine the importance of each skill by percentage. Also the researcher prepared a program aimed at developing the skills which got 50% and more. The program was taught to a group of students after the application of a test in the writing skills, and then the same test was applied again as a post-test. One of the

most important results of the study was to determine the written expression skills in 37 students, and in the forefront came the knowledge of the beginning and end of the paragraph, and the suitability of the words to the meanings. A clear improvement on students who were taught by the program has been seen, since the proportion of expression errors decreased, and the meanings were better.

Sehandler (1992) observed the effect of cooperative education in the reading comprehension and expression of second grade students. The study sample included 33 students from the primary second grade, and it was classified into two groups: experimental which included 16 students, and a control which included 17 students. The experimental group received instruction through the cooperative method, while the control group received instruction in the traditional manner. The study lasted 12 weeks, and then the students took a test in reading comprehension. The results showed that students in the experimental group scored higher than the ones in the control group on the reading comprehension test. In light of the results, the researcher recommended using the collaborative teaching method among the students of the primary and upper stages.

3. Methods and Procedures

3.1 Method
The researchers adopted the descriptive approach, which relies on the study of phenomena as they really are; this is considered the right approach to such studies.

3.2 Population of the Study
The study population consisted of all students in the Arabic and English Departments at Al-Quds University, and the number reached 320 students in the second semester of the academic year 2015-2016

3.3 Sample of the Study
The study sample consisted of 128 students randomly selected (40% from the study population), and Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the sample

Variable	Variable Level	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	38	29.7%
	Female	90	70.3%
Level	Second	28	21.9%
	Third	42	32.8%
	Fourth and above	58	45.3%
Department	Arabic	54	42.2%
	English	74	57.8%
Level of Achievement	Low	2	1.6%
	Moderate/Average	96	75%
	High	30	23.4%

3.4 Variables of the Study

A.   Independent Variables: Gender (Male, Female); Level (Second, Third and Fourth and above); Department (Arabic and English); Level of Achievement (Low, Moderate and High).

B.   Dependent Variable: Students' difficulties in written expression in the Arabic and English Departments at Al-Quds University.

3.5 Instruments of the Study

The researchers built a questionnaire by taking advantage of some previous studies, and the reliability of the instrument was achieved through presenting it to a group of experienced and competent arbitrators, the coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) was (0.88).

3.6 Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis of the data was done by using numbers and percentages, and averages, standard deviations, and test v (t-test) and test of variance (One Way Analysis Of Variance) and the coefficient of stability alfa Cronbach, using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), and the following correction key was adopted:

SMA ≤ 2.33 Low
<2.33SMA medium ≤ 3.66
<3.66SMA big

4. Results and Discussion

1.   What is the degree of students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University?

To answer this question, the researchers calculated the mean score and standard deviation, where the mean score was 3.56, and the standard deviation was 0.48, which is moderate.

The mean score of statement 32 which states that "*students rely on the World Wide Web in order to write the subject of expression,*" was 4.4 and the standard deviation was 0.83, followed by statement 13 which states that "*the dependence of some students on others in the writing of the subject of the written expression*" was 4.27 and the standard deviation was 0.87, it was followed by statement 19 which states that "*the difficulty of applying the grammar and its use in written expression*" with a mean score of 4.23 and a standard deviation of 0.90, and reached its lowest averages; statement 1, which states that "*the lack of skills on the part of the teacher to teach written expression*" a mean score of 2.22 and a standard deviation of 0.45, followed by statement 3 which states "*the length of the course material required to be covered by the teacher*" with a mean score of 2.844 and a standard deviation of 1.15.

The researchers believe that the difficulties were moderate, which is an indicator of the fact that the difficulties of written expression were not all to a high degree from the perspective of students, but there are many difficulties that caused it to come to a low degree. This result agreed with the result of Alhaddad's study (2005).

2.   Do the averages in students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University vary due to gender, academic level, department, and level of achievement?

To answer this question, it was converted into a null hypothesis at the level of statistical significance ($0.05 \geq \alpha$).

The First Null Hypotheses which states that there were no statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($0.05 \geq \alpha$) in the mean scores of students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University due to gender. To test the hypothesis, the researchers used an analysis of the independent samples t as in Table 2.

Table 2: Analysis of the independent samples t due to gender

Variable	Number	SMA	Standard Deviation	Calculated T value	Degrees of Freedom	Calculated Level of Significance
Male	38	3.34	0.35	2.48	126	0.014
Female	90	3.55	0.48			

Table 2 shows that the significance of the calculated level and value of 0.014, which is less than the level of statistical significance ($0.05 \geq \alpha$), and the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative one, which indicates that there were statistically significant differences in the averages of the difficulties in students' written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University due to gender, was accepted,

and it was in favor of females, and the mean score reached 3.55 and the standard deviation reached 0.48, while the mean score reached 3.34 for males and the standard deviation reached 0.35.

The researchers attribute this result to the fact that males have friction with the external environment more than females, making their perception wide generated through creative ideas for written expression, and communication between students outside the university is more than that among females, so they have the ability to written expression and exchange of ideas more than females. This differs from the study of Alhallaq and Alhashimi (2011) and the study of Alnajjar (2004), which did not show differences in favor of gender.

The second null hypothesis, which states that there were no statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($0.05 \geq \alpha$) in the mean score of students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University due to academic level.

To test the hypothesis, the researchers calculated the means and standard deviations, as in the Table 3.

Table 3: Means and standard deviations due to level

Level	Number	SMA	Standard Deviation
Second	28	3.19	0.48
Third	42	3.47	0.49
Fourth and above	58	3.63	0.34
Total	128	3.48	0.45

To test the hypothesis, the researchers used the analysis of variance as shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Analysis of variance due to level

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Average of Squares	Calculated F Value	Calculated Level of Significance
Between groups	3.71	2	1.85	10.12	0.001
Within groups	22.88	125	0.18		
Total	26.59	127			

Table 4 shows that the significance of the calculated level and its value of 0.001 are less than the level of statistical significance ($0.05 \geq \alpha$) and because of that, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis, which states that there are statistically significant differences in the averages of the students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University due to

level, was accepted, and to reveal for whom the benefit of those differences was, the advanced statistical analysis Post hoc was used, as shown in table 5.

Table 5: Comparison posteriori (LSD) due to academic level

Level I	Level J	Averages variation (I-J)
Second	Third	-0.28*
Fourth and above		-0.44*
Third	Second	0.28*
	Fourth and above	-0.16
Fourth and above	Second	0.44*
	Third	0.16

*Statistical significance

Comparing the second level with the third, it was seen that it was in favor of the third, and comparing the second with the fourth and above, it was in favor of the fourth and above.

The researchers attribute this result to the fact that: when a student moves from one level to another at the university, his/her courses and duties increase, especially that a third or a fourth year student registers more credit hours for graduation purposes, in addition to the lack of time for the student, which may force him/her to quick ways in doing his/her research like the Web, with the result that he/she will not rely on himself/herself, and the written expression will be weakened.

The third null hypothesis which states that there were no statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($0.05 \geq \alpha$) in the mean score of students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University due to department.

To test the hypothesis, the researchers used the analysis of the independent samples t as in Table 6.

Table 6: Analysis of the independent samples due to department

Variable	Number	SMA	Standard Deviation	Calculated T value	Degrees of Freedom	Calculated Level of Significance
Arabic Department	54	3.58	0.36	2.05	126	0.043
English Department	74	3.41	0.51			

It can be seen from Table 6 that the significance of the calculated level and its value is 0.043, which is less than the level of statistical significance ($0.05 \geq \alpha$), and the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis, which states that there were

statistically significant differences in the averages of students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University due to department, was accepted, and it was in favor of the Arabic Department, where the mean score reached 3.58 and the standard deviation reached 0.36, while the mean score of the Department of English reached 3.41 and the standard deviation reached 0.51.

The researchers attribute this result to the nature of the Arabic language, as it is very rich in vocabulary and expressions compared to the English language, which makes the process of expression in the English language simpler than in Arabic.

The fourth null hypothesis which states that there were no statistically significant differences at the level of significance $(0.05 \geq \alpha)$ in the mean score of students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University due to level of achievement.

The researchers calculated the means and standard deviations, as shown in the table 7.

Table 7: Means and standard deviations due to level of achievement

Level	Number	SMA	Standard Deviation
Low	2	3.31	0.000
Moderate	96	3.54	0.49
High	30	3.34	0.31
Total	128	3.50	0.46

To test the hypothesis, the researchers used the analysis of variance as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Analysis of variance due to level of achievement

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Average Squares	Calculated F Value	Calculated Level of Significance
Between Groups	0.95	2	0.474	2.312	0.103
Within Groups	25.63	125	0.205		
Total	26.58	127			

Table No. 8 shows that the significance of the calculated level of the value 0.103 which is greater than the level of statistical significance $(0.05 \geq \alpha)$, and the null hypothesis, which states that there were no statistically significant differences in the mean scores of students' difficulties in written expression in the Departments of English and Arabic at Al-Quds University, due to level of achievement, was accepted.

The researchers attribute the result of the difficulty in written expression among students, not to the level of achievement, but to the fact that it is a skill that requires training and reading on the part of the students in order to acquire it.

5. Conclusions

Written expression is the most important activity in linguistic patterns because it is a means of communication between individuals, and it is a kind of self-expression, which enables learners to express their needs, feelings, observations and experiences in sound and correct terms. Written expression also provides them with the necessary words and structures that can be added to their language earnings that can be used in their talk and writing. Written expression also equips them with a set of ideas and sound trends and getting them used to arrange and link ideas in a sequence so as to create cohesion and coherence, with the result that their words will have power and influence on the listener and the reader respectively. In addition to that, written expression helps prepare learners to cope with various life situations that require the eloquence of tongue and the ability to improvise to live in the community effectively.

In this study, the results showed that the difficulties in written expression was moderate, which confirms the presence of some of the students' written expression skills, but they need to be worked on and developed. The results also showed that the difficulty in written expression is higher among females than males, and they are higher among the students of the Arabic Department than the students of the English Department. The results also revealed that there were no differences among students due to level of achievement. This is a great indication that the vocabulary and ideas of the students are the foundation for the development of their written expression skills.

Therefore, it is necessary to enhance the activities of linguistic and language classes such as writing articles and short stories in order to develop students' vocabulary, and focus on their needs and their orientation on the topics of written expression.

6. Recommendations

In light of the above results, the following recommendations have been made by the researchers:

- The use of linguistic activities in class, such as articles and short stories that overuse words and vocabulary for the development of the written expression of students.
- The need to have an independent course for written expression of its own and a course offered by the Departments of Arabic and English language within their plans.
- Taking into account students' tendencies when choosing topics for written expression.

- Conducting a similar study on students from other Palestinian universities, and study the difficulties of teaching written expression from the perspective of teachers at the universities.
- Setting up a program for the development of written expression skills of university students.

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