

Writer's Autobiography

Someone Someone

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Writing can range from simple and direct to complicated and subtle. And thus, from both simple and complicated experiences my writing skills were created. What determines good writing skills? Is it one's ability to articulate thoughts simply and successfully? Or is it the use of fancy and attractive vocabulary that might confuse the reader? As a young boy, my writings on walls were fancy, attractive, and complicated. However bad and misunderstood by adults, they were purely expressive of my inner feelings. Those expressions were understandable to me, but what use will they serve if others cannot understand them? Frankly, they were utterly useless, and there was no purpose in these writings. I also had no use of the Arabic and French alphabets I acquired in kindergarten. But yet, on the not so fortunate day of the Gulf War, things steered in a different direction. The war had the greatest impact upon my writing in Arabic as a whole.

We were on vacation in Syria. Because of the war we did not go back home at the end of the summer. Instead, my sisters and I were enrolled in a private school there. It was there that I obtained the basic foundation of Arabic and French and learned how to write. It was there when I started speaking French with everybody, including my sisters. I interacted with people only in French and, as a result, my Arabic was appalling. Nevertheless, my mother later interfered; she had us speak in Arabic as well as write diaries in Arabic. We would also write all sorts of creative letters from time to time. At other times, she would read us Arabic stories and ask us to write summaries for these stories. She would correct them at the end of the day, as well as help us develop basic writing techniques.

The war came to an end and our long vacation also came to an end. As soon as I went back to Kuwait I was enrolled at AlBayan Bilingual School. There I lost the foundation of French Language in replacement for the English I was picking up at my new school. As I grew older, my writing in Arabic became more intricate and developed, but my writing in English, on the other hand, did not. Whenever we had a short essay to write, I would write it in Arabic and then literally translate it in English. I never thought in English because I lacked the motivation to do so. It was my mistake.

My English writing suffers from many problems. I lack the confidence of a good writer. This lack of confidence influenced my writing to an extent that it would take me hours to write down an introduction. And when I did, I would write down anything coming across my mind, whether it related to the topic or not. When I wrote in English, I did not stay on topic or organize my thoughts. As long as I write down grammatically correct sentences I could care less about anything pertaining to organization or topic. Expectedly, I also find concluding any of my lengthy and flawless English papers relatively hard. All of my English written papers back in school earned bad grades. The bad grades instilled hatred for English writing in me every time I saw that C coming up. In contrast, my Arabic writing suffers from lack of mistakes. I need not think about the topic deeply because I enjoy writing in Arabic; I am internally motivated to do well. Therefore, I would start writing my good ideas in an orderly fashion and would wrap it all up in perfect manner.

In addition to the skill level differences between my Arabic and English writing, the genres of writing I completed in each language differed too. All my English writing was involuntary; I only wrote what I was required to, such as basic narrative

essays, research papers, and lab reports. My writing in Arabic however, was predominantly voluntary. I wrote articles for our school's magazine, I wrote my opinions on significant social problems, and foremost, speeches. I am extremely proud of these accomplishments because Arabic is extremely complex and difficult. Its alphabet is composed of 28 letters and each letter is written differently depending on its order in the word. Furthermore, these letters can be pronounced in many different ways depending on the symbols inserted on top of these letters. These symbols can not only change the meaning of the word, but can transform it into a preposition, phrase, or at times into a verb. Verbs are conjugated in different ways in respect to different pronouns, which makes the language even more complex and more difficult to learn. For me, to have mastered such a language, and to be able to communicate through such a language, I am proud of such a great accomplishment. The purpose behind such writing was mainly to express my beliefs and thoughts and to communicate at the same time, but at a formal level.

Online chatting, however, provided a new medium of communication and a new language although it was merely for social purposes. My sisters would socialize online using weird symbols and numbers, along with weird arrangements of English letters to compose Arabic words. I could not understand one bit of that so called "internet language" of theirs. I quickly learned that language. In spite of this kind of writing being simple and informal, it has significantly changed my world. Now, whenever I write e-mail messages or chat over the internet with friends I use that "language". That "language" is a part of my daily writing experience.

Whether I realize it or not, writing, in one form or the other, existed and will exist throughout my entire life. So what determines one's good writing skills? Is it one's ability to articulate thoughts simply and successfully? Or is it the use of fancy and attractive vocabulary that might confuse the reader? My writing using the "internet language" is quite simple but thoughtful; it serves its purpose. Articles I write for Arabic magazines are more fancy and complicated but thoughtful; they serve their purpose. Good writing skills are not about the simplicity or the complexity of the writing, it is about meeting your writing purpose in the most convenient and simplest manner for that specific purpose. In conclusion, I believe that I am able to write very well in Arabic, however, not quite as well in English. But I do believe that with more practice and exposure to English I will overcome anything obstructing my English writing skills.