

## **An overview on the Writing Test Performance of ESL Learners at the University Test for English language-UTEL**

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The University Test on English language (UTEL) is an annual English Language test conducted simultaneously in all the universities in Sri Lanka to test the undergraduates' proficiency levels in the four language skills. The test is conducted both through face to face and online modes. The purpose of the test is to enable the target group to know their proficiency levels in all four skills and to motivate them to improve their levels of English in order to uplift their employability. This paper discusses the performance at the University Test on English Language (UTEL) in writing skills, conducted in 2014 by the universities in Sri Lanka. A common writing test was administered to the target group to gauge the proficiency level in writing skill. The objective of the study is to find the common mistakes found in the performance in writing tests and to present an overview on the writing test performance of ESL learners' performances in two writing tasks. Sixty answer scripts from three different universities were utilized as data for the study. The answer scripts were corrected based on UTEL bench marking scales or descriptors and graded. Quantitative methodology was utilized to analyze the data. The general mistakes in their performances in writing test were analyzed. The findings show that the participants have made similar mistakes in writing the two tasks irrespective of their universities. The study has an implication of applying the suggestions in making better performance in writing skills at the UTEL in order to enable the target group to obtain proficiency in writing skills.

**Key words:** University test on English language, writing test performance, tertiary level, ESL learners.