



وقائع المؤتمر العلمي السنوي الثالث لكلية التربية الأساسية
في مجال العلوم الانسانية والتربوية والنفسية والموسوم:
(مؤتمر كلية التربية الأساسية في مجال العلوم الإنسانية والتربوية والنفسية)
وتحت شعار (نحو رؤية إنسانية وتربوية رائدة لبناء مجتمع معرفي متكامل)
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The Relationship Between Academic Writing Competencies And Writing Performance Among Undergraduate Students In Iraq

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Abstract

Students are having problem using English language, particularly, in academic research writing. Pursuant to this fact, academic research writing competencies are of the most significant factors that influence the writing performance among those students. The objectives of this study are (1) to examine the significant relationships between writing competencies and writing performance, and (2) to develop a model of academic writing competencies for undergraduate students. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with Amos version (29) was used as the advanced quantitative measure besides other statistical measures in order to attain the prior objectives. The main findings of the study showed that there was a significant relationship between academic writing competencies and writing performance. Finally, based on the findings, this study developed a model, which acknowledges that academic writing competencies are the interactions between the various items that could be an effective guide to enhance the writing performance of undergraduate students in the future.

Keywords: Academic writing competencies, writing performance, undergraduate students, Structural Equation Modelling, Mustansiriyah University

Introduction

Academic writing is regarded as the main problematic issue to enhance students' writing performance in the academic fields globally, and specifically in Iraqi context. For that reason, students fail to improve their writing performance to demonstrate the fundamental competencies. Recent research has suggested that academic prose is not entirely impersonal, but that writers gain credibility by projecting an identity invested with proper

authority, displaying confidence in their evaluations and commitment to their ideas. Zaki (2015) assured that academic writing is considered necessary in higher education progress, and it is one of the most difficult challenges for university students.

Therefore, this study aims first, to examine the significant relationship between academic writing, and students' writing performance. Secondly, this research study intends to develop a model of academic writing competencies among students.

Objectives of the Study

- 1-To examine the significant relationships between academic writing and students' writing performance.
- 2-To propose a model of academic writing for undergraduate students

Research Questions

- 1-Is there any significant relationship between academic writing competencies and students' writing performance?
- 2- What is the proposed model for academic writing among undergraduate students?

Problem of Study

Most of students strive to improve themselves in the academia in various disciplines. In other words, Zhu (2004a) states that students need to write, and mainly in upper graduate level courses at university, which are typically related to their disciplines. However, those students face problems in writing academically as they lack essential competencies to enhance their performance to publish their academic articles. Fareed (2016) clarified that students are still facing issues in English language, and particularly in writing. These issues arise in several aspects of academic writing such as incompetence of syntax, idea expansion, coherence, content selection, inappropriate use of vocabulary, and rhetoric conventions. These issues appear at their learning stage in early college level, as can be classified into linguistics, cognitive, and pedagogical. The main cause of these issues are attributed to the motivation of learners, who are unclear about the purpose of their academic context in their learning (Pineteh, 2014). Besides, other issues that prevent those students in mastering the competencies of academic

writing are the negative attitudes towards the academic English course, insufficient time for teaching writing, and students' weak academic backgrounds have been reported to be some of the factors affecting students' writing competencies (Bilal *et al.*, 2013).

Literature Review

Key themes in the current literature indicate a different range of practices related to academic writing. Regarding these findings, the existed review of literature aimed at examining the important correlation between academic writing, and students' writing performance. This study combines past studies and identifies dominant trends.

Writing Competencies and Writing Performance

It is essential to understand the casual relations between linguistics competencies and writing performance among postgraduate students in academic research writing (Caraker, 2012; Chomsky, 2014; Radford, 1981). A considerable number of research studies have demonstrated various views regarding several factors of linguistic aspects in academic research writing such as vocabulary, grammatical aspects, organizing ideas, spelling, and referencing. These factors have an obvious effect on the performance of students in writing.

In language teaching, and according to Reishaan (2008), grammar is a statement of competence, while production is a part of performance. That is, one can claim that grammar feeds such a type of performance. In other words, Chomsky (2014) mentions that grammar is a systematic description, and as one of those linguistic competencies of the native speakers that enable them to understand language fluently. Thus, grammar of language is a model of the linguistic competence of the fluent native speaker of the language (Radford, 1981:2).

In academic writing, the relationship between discourse competencies and writing performance among students are used to improve their writing skills. Since these competencies become the primary dominants for students' achievements, they regarded these competencies as an influence for the success of students' writing (Dornyei, 1994; Ellis, 1994; Nanba & Okumura, 2000, p.48). In the context of academic research writing, Jaroszek (2008)

mentioned that discourse competence is the ability to use, produce, and recognize coherent and cohesive texts in a written. On the other hand, Canale (1983) revised the definition of discourse competence as an independent element from sociolinguistic competence to achieve a unified written text. In this case, Brown (1996: 3) suggests that the performance of students' writing is linked to two processes; knowing (the forms of) a language", and "the ability to use the language that one knows". Further Brown (1996) also implies that the performance expresses the 'ability' that should be linked to 'knowledge'. Therefore, performance is "the production and understanding of utterances" (Lyons 1996: 17). In other words, it seems that performance reflects written language production or reception interpretable as the actual outcome of meaningful linguistic interaction (Jaroszek, 2008).

Hypothesis

Ha₁: There is a significant relationship between competencies of academic writing and writing performance of undergraduate students.

Null hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant relationship between competencies of academic research writing and writing performance of undergraduate students.

Method of Study

For the current study, a correlational design is used, as it is a statistical test used to determine the tendency for two or more variables (Creswell, 2013). It can measure whether or not two or more variables are correlated. Many researchers recommend using correlational design to determine to which extent the factors are related. **Thus, this paper will examine a correlation relationship is between academic writing competencies and writing performance.**

Therefore, this study proposed a model with two variables; one of them is latent variable; academic writing competencies and the later variable is writing performance, which is considered as a direct variable.

Data Collection

The questionnaires were distributed among the participants in the first academic year of the study 2024-2025. A formal meeting was taking place

with the head of department to organize the meeting with the participants. Once the researcher distributed the questionnaires among 120 students, then invited them to participate in the given questionnaires.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data examines the significant relationship academic writing competencies and students' writing performance. In this study, factor analysis was carried out to ascertain the competencies of academic writing, which emerged from students' responses to the questionnaire.

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was conducted to measure the inferential analysis by using two steps; Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was to find out the measured variables and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA).

Analysis Technique

Research questions were analysed by two statistical analysis techniques; (SPSS) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with (AMOS 29). In this paper, the questions were examined by using the questionnaire that distributed among 120 undergraduate students in Mustansiriyah university. The research question 1 implied the significant relationships between academic writing competencies and writing performance among undergraduate students, and question 2 is related to the model of academic writing that is analysed by using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with (AMOS 29).

Variables Measurement

The variables of this research are writing performance and academic writing competencies. These variables can be measured by the five Likert scale of degree of agreement, 1 "Strongly disagree" to 5 "Strongly agree", and the level of competency as 1 for "not competent" to 5 highly competent, which are used for all items that measure these variables.

Linguistics

The items of the questionnaire, which relate to the linguistics competencies have been developed from an extensive review of previous literatures concerning academic writing (Usó-Juan, 2008; Butler, 2006). The items also include sub variables; vocabulary, grammatical features, synonyms,

punctuations, and conjunctions. The linguistics competencies variables include 10 items of Five-level (Likert) scale degree of competency; “1 Not competent” to 5 “Highly competent” as shown in the table 1:

Table 1 *Measurement of Linguistics Competencies variables*

The Main Constructs	Source	The Modified Constructs
1-Understand and use academic vocabulary in context	Butler (2006)	I am able to understand and use vocabulary in academic context
2-Distinguish between essential and non-essential information, fact and opinion, propositions and arguments and cause and effect; and classify and categorise data that make comparisons	Butler (2006)	I am able to distinguish between propositions, arguments, cause and effect
3-Use of synonyms. (Using different words for same meaning)	Kong (1998)	I am able to demonstrate synonyms (using different words for the same meaning)
4-Correct Articles (a, an, the)	Kong (1998)	I am able to use correct articles in my writing (a, an, the)
5-Correct punctuation	Kong (1998)	I am able to use a correct punctuations and conjunctions in my writing
6-Demonstrate control of grammar, diction, and paragraph and sentence structure and an understanding of English usage	Intersegmental Committee (2002)	I am able to acknowledge grammatical features; tenses, and use accurate words in sentence structures
7- I am able to understand the expressions to present abstract ideas through tense and voice.	Constructed by the researcher	I am able to understand the expressions to present abstract ideas through tense and voice
8- I can use various types of sentence structures.	Costandi (2013)	I am able to demonstrate grammatical structures like phrases
9- I am able to demonstrate simple present, past, and future verb tenses in writing	Constructed by the researcher	I am able to demonstrate simple present, past, and future verb tenses in writing

Discourse Competencies

The items of these variables are related to the discourse competencies that developed from previous works (Butler, 2006; Chou, 1998; Can, 2011). The discourse variables include 10 items to evaluate students' abilities in discourse competencies ranging from "1 for poor skills" to 5 "excellent".

Table 2 Measurement of Discourse Competencies Variables

The Main Constructs	Source	The Modified Constructs
1- I am able to make connections between texts and putting forward my own understanding when writing my thesis	Constructed by the researcher	I am able to make connections between texts and putting forward my own understanding when writing my thesis
2- Quality of the content and argument	Butler (2006)	I am able to present my arguments in a logical order to arrive at conclusion
3-understand how to depends on well evidence in your writing.	Butler (2006)	I am able to argue to understand what 'evidence' in my writing to support my claims
4- I am able to demonstrates highly logical sequence in writing	Constructed by the researcher	I am able to demonstrates highly logical sequence in writing
5- Appropriate use of transition words: (e. 'moreover')	Kong (1998)	I am able to demonstrate appropriate use of transition words (e.g. "moreover, furthermore")
6-Structure sentences and paragraphs appropriately.	Butler (2006)	I am able to structure sentences and paragraphs appropriately
7-Use cohesive words such as "because, thus, or however" to connect ideas in sentences to create a coherent text.	Butler (2006)	I am able to use connecting words to connect ideas in sentences to create a coherent text.
8-Write structured texts that show an awareness of logical flow of texts.	Butler (2006)	I am able to interpret structured texts in terms of logical development of texts
9- Clarity and understand ability of the statements	Cohen (1990)	I am able to demonstrate clarity of meaning in my writing
10- I am able to change, or make my ideas clearer to be understood among other colloquies	Constructed by the researcher	I am able to change, or make my ideas clearer to be understood among other colloquies

Sociolinguistics Competencies

The items of these variables express the sociolinguistics competencies of academic writing, which have been developed from previous research studies (Muniandy, 2010; Claire, 1997; Mede, 2015; Bunton, 1999; Hyland, 2004)

Table 3 Measurement of Sociolinguistics Competencies Variables

The Main Constructs	Source	The Modified Constructs
1- Sociolinguistic competence requires adjusting one's grammatical forms	Claire (1997, p12)	I am able to adjusting grammatical features to be appropriate to the setting of the communication takes place
2-Writing with an 'authoritative voice' in the written text	Butler (2006)	I am able to write with an 'authoritative voice' in the written text.
3- Sociolinguistics requires studying the relationship between language and culture	(Crystal, 2003)	I am able to deal relationship between language and society
4- Understanding of the social activities through communications with others.	Diplomová práce (2023)	I am able to deal with the shared information of the participants and the communicative purpose for their interaction.
5-Understanding the effects of a text on the audience"	Gomez (2009)	I am able to write for an audience and my instructor encouraged me to make my writing written well
6- Understanding social settings where the language is used among society members.	Muniandy (2010)	I am able to acquire the social context that is used (the role of the audience, the information to be shared with them).
7-Doctoral students learn how to publish in scholarly refereed journals	Habibie (2015)	I am able to conduct an academic paper to be published
8- Interact with native speakers through attending exchange programs.	Mede (2015)	Being able to interact with native speakers through an exchange programs.
9- I am able to develop my writing through the presentation of research study	Constructed by the researcher	I am able to develop my writing through the presentation of research study with other students
10- Signalling students' attitudes and commitments towards both the propositional content and the audience of the texts	Bunton, 1999; Hyland, 2004)	I am able to demonstrate a clear understanding of purpose and audience in my writing

Cognitive Competencies

The items of the questionnaire are related to the cognitive competencies that have been developed by previous researchers. The cognitive variables include 10 items of Five-level (Likert) scale degree of agreement; “1 Strongly disagree” to 5 “Strongly agree”.

Table 4 Measurement of Cognitive Competencies Variables

The Main Constructs	Source	The Modified Constructs
1- Finding relevant information	Butler (2006)	I am able to find relevant information regarding to my topic before writing
2- Organising ideas in the academic text to make efficient arguments	Butler (2006)	capable of organizing ideas in the academic to make a good argument
3- Integrating sources into writing text	Butler (2006)	I am able to retrieve and analyse information from different sources
4- Analysing certain topics	Butler (2006)	I am able to analyse the topic in my writing
5- I am able to write an accurate summary of information that I have read in English	Constructed by the researcher	I am able to write an accurate summary of information that I have read in English
6- Self- evaluation to learn autonomy for developing writing skills	Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senate(2002)	I am able to self-evaluate and continue to learn autonomy for developing my writing
7- Evaluate others' work with justification	Developed by researchers	I am able to critically evaluate others' work with justification
8- Critical analysis, synthesis and independent evaluation of quantitative and/or qualitative data.	Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senate(2002)	I am able to critical analysis, synthesis and independent evaluation of quantitative and/or qualitative data.
9-Synthesising information into an organized and coherent way of writing style.	Butler (2006)	I am able to synthesize information about your topics, and gain a new perspective on the literature
10- Reading critically academic texts to enhance my competence in writing	Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senate(2002)	I am able to read critically academic texts to enhance my competence in academic research writing

Writing Performance

The items of the questionnaire are related to the writing performance of students' attitudes and experiences towards writing that have been developed from previous research studies (Graham, 2017; Pek, 2015; Nik, 2010).

Table 5 Measurement of Writing Performance Variables

The Main Constructs	Source	The Modified Constructs
1- Elaborating on my evidence to solidify my paper topic	Kim (2008)	I have the ability to use of evidence to support the arguments being presented
2- Focusing on my topic	Kim (2008)	I can focus on the final product and generating grammatically correct texts
3- Demonstrates a cohesive understanding about the topic.	Kim (2008)	I can write a coherence paragraph
4- Sharing and discovering new ideas and these are helpful and important for both parties	Nik (2010)	I can organize ideas in an outline
5 Sentence structures	Kim (2008)	I am able to write sentence structures that is appropriate to the subject matter.
6- Organise socio-cultural events to encourage students participation.	Yang (2025)	I am able to understand of events, actions, and views of other in academic research writing
7- Thinking creatively and have good ideal, imaginative, and humanistic elements	Heong (2010)	Thinking critically and creatively when you write
8- Transition between sentences and paragraphs is smooth.	Pongsiriwet (2001)	I can write compound sentences using cohesive words (and, but, so)
9- Using connections words when writing paragraphs.	Butler (2006)	Being able to use connections words
10- having careful choice of vocabulary and understand grammatical patterns and to be able to write sentence structures that is appropriate to the subject matter	Nik (2010)	I am able to create organized paragraphs from research materials

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

CFA was conducted for both convergent and discriminant validity (Brown, 2006). Figure 1 and Figure 2 have shown two types of CFA; First-Order and Second- Order of academic writing competencies. The current paper can use these types to construct the model in the first order, while most of the researchers suggest second-order of CFA. Therefore, the researchers used the second type of CFA to examine the competencies of academic writing. The results have shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 that the factor loadings are more than .5 and fit indices for both models are acceptable as follow the suggestion of Mueller & Hancock (2008), the model fit well since RMSEA = 0.57, CFI = 0.91, and $\chi^2/df = 2.200$.

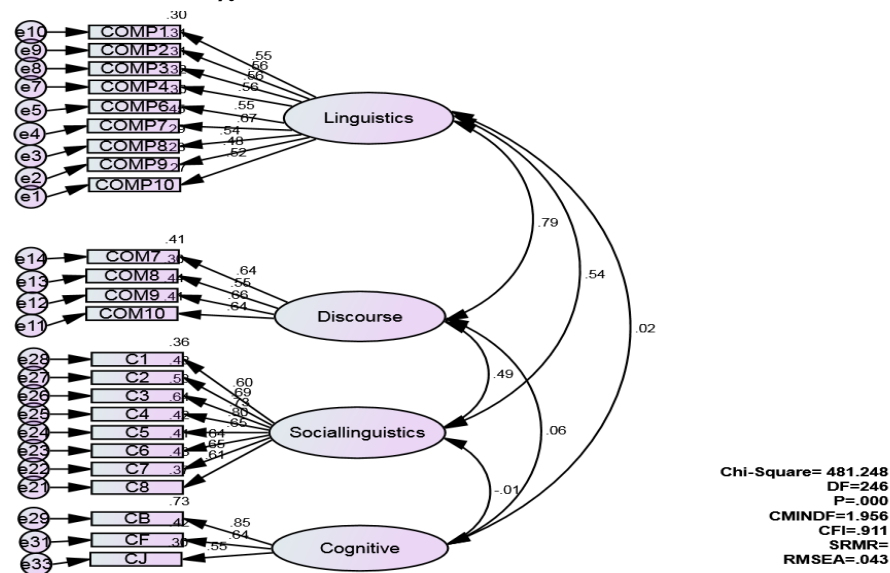


Figure 1 CFA of Competencies First- Order

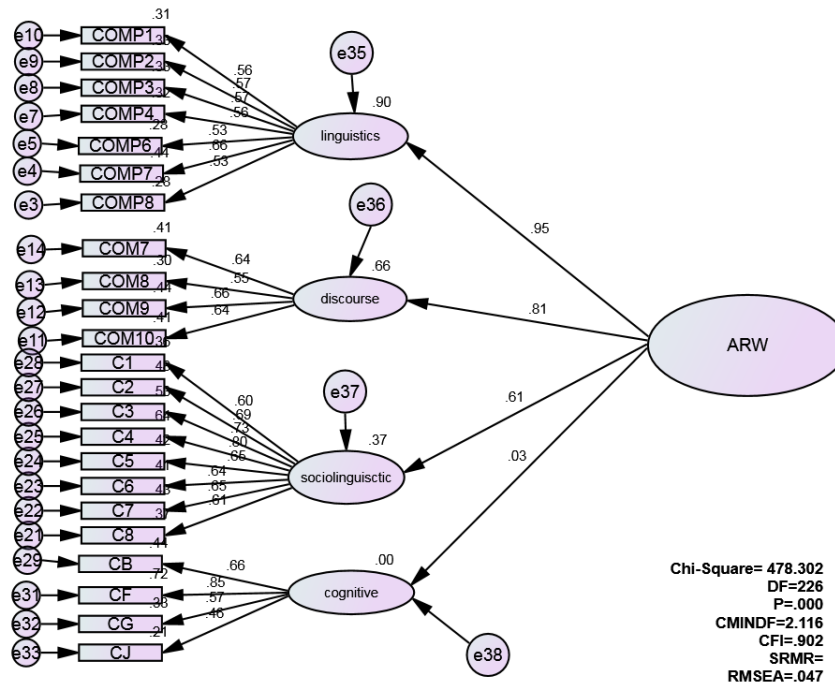


Figure 2 CFA of Competencies Second- Order

Table 6 Summary of Model Fit of Academic Writing Competencies (First Order)

Model	ChiSquare (χ^2)	Df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	IFI	TLI	CFI
Competencies	481.248	246	1.95	0.04	0.91	0.89	0.91

Table 7 Summary of Model Fit of (Second Order) Academic Writing Competencies

Model	ChiSquare (χ^2)	Df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	IFI	TLI	CFI
Competencies	478.302	226	2.11	0.04	0.90	0.88	0.90

Structural Model (Direct Model)

Direct model is tested for model comparison, and it examines the direct relationships between academic writing competencies and writing performance.

In choosing structural model fit, as the index ranges from zero (poor fit) to one (perfect fit), thereby the higher the index, the better the goodness of fit of the model. Thus, in this study, Table 10 and Figure 3 show that how good is the model fit in which there are several indicators computed by using AMOS to examine the goodness of the model fit. According to Best Practices (Kline, 2010; steiger,1990; Byrne 2009), there are three measures to determine the goodness-of-fit; chi-square statistics, the GFI, the RMSEA. The most fundamental measure of overall fit in a structural equation model is CMIN/df (1-5), are normally considered as acceptable. The rest of the goodness-of-fit indices such as CFI should be at least 0.90 to be considered as acceptable and to indicate a good fit. Also, the Index RAMSEA below 0.08. Therefore, the values that are presented in this research study meet these standards in which other research studies recommend to follow in the procedure of examining the model fit indices.

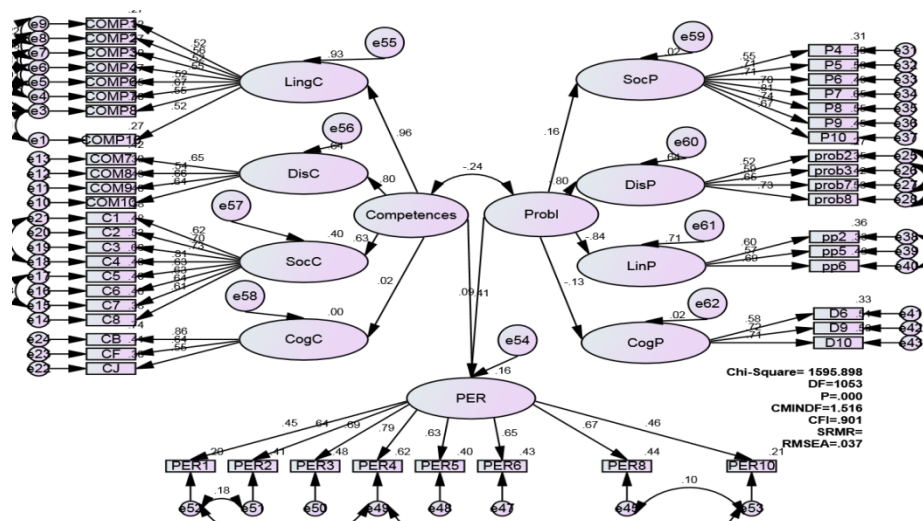


Figure 3 Structural Model

Table 8 Relationship between Academic Writing Competencies and Writing Performance

Dependent variable		Independent variables	Estimate	Sig
Writing Performance	---	Academic Writing competencies	.116	***

P-value<0.01, P-value<0.05

Table 8 presents hypothesis 1 in which that there is a significant relationship between academic writing competencies and writing performance. The results show that there is significant positive relationship between these two variables ($\beta = .116$, $p < 0.001$); therefore, the Hypothesis 1 is supporting the claim of the researchers. In this case, it is likely to state that academic writing improves the writing performance of students.

Discussion

The findings of the hypothesis “there is a significant relationship between academic writing competencies and writing performance” showed that there was a positive significant relationship between academic writing problems and writing performance ($\beta = .636$), ($p = .048$). This relationship is considered strong relation between writing competencies and writing performance. To compare with other research study, Ishag Adam (2015) stated that the overall performance of the students in grammatical competencies for both tests was poor. Additionally, the results also have revealed that most of the students' deficiency in the grammatical test was associated with the grammatical areas of tensing affixation, passivisation, reported sentences and phrasal verbs.

Conclusion

This chapter presents three sections; the first section expresses the descriptive statistical of constructs by using SPSS 21.0. The second part evaluates the measurement model by using SEM with Amos 20, and CFI is used for each variable of study. Third part is structured model to test the hypotheses of the study; the hypotheses of the study are significant.

The findings of this study revealed that there was a direct relationship between academic writing competencies, and writing performance which is so called “Direct model”. This study could be a guidance and supportive tool for those who want to publish their academic articles as well as following the proposed methods and model to enhance their written performance for publishing issues.

The findings also expressed significant relationships between academic writing competencies and writing performance. The findings also indicated that there was a relatively high correlation between linguistic, discourse, sociolinguistic competencies, and the writing performance.

Regarding writing performance of students, linguistic competencies are expected to improve their writing performance. This expectation is proved via testing the two proposed hypotheses with students at universities. The first hypothesis shows significant relationship that grammar level leads to increase the features of language in their writing in terms of linguistic competencies. The result show there was a strong relationship between the problems and writing performance, that means the performance will decrease due to the problems still high in the writing competencies.

Therefore, the recommendation for further research studies should be also the focus of students’ capabilities to master certain factors of writing competencies like linguistics or sociolinguistics competencies. The development of academic writing competencies in Iraqi context is highly warranted since students need time to acquire knowledge and practice these competencies.

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وقائع المؤتمر العلمي السنوي الثالث لكلية التربية الأساسية
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العلاقة بين كفاءات الكتابة الأكاديمية وأداء الكتابة لدى طلاب المرحلة الجامعية الأولى في العراق

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مستخلص البحث:

تعد كفاءات الكتابة الأكاديمية من أهم العوامل التي تؤثر على أداء الكتابة لدى طلاب المرحلة الجامعية. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى (1) فحص العلاقات المهمة بين مهارات الكتابة وأداء الكتابة، و(2) تطوير نموذج لمهارات الكتابة الأكاديمية لطلاب المرحلة الجامعية. تم استخدام نمذجة المعادلات الهيكلية (SEM) باستخدام برنامج Amos كأداة كمية متقدمة بالإضافة إلى أدوات إحصائية أخرى من أجل تحقيق الأهداف السابقة. أظهرت النتائج الرئيسية للدراسة وجود علاقة مهمة بين مهارات الكتابة الأكاديمية وأداء الكتابة. وأخيراً، بناءً على النتائج، طورت هذه الدراسة نموذجاً يعترف بأن مهارات الكتابة الأكاديمية هي تفاعلات بين العناصر المختلفة التي يمكن أن تكون دليلاً فعالاً لتعزيز أداء الكتابة لدى طلاب المرحلة الجامعية في المستقبل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كفاءات الكتابة الأكاديمية، الأداء الكتابي، طلاب المرحلة الجامعية، الجامعة المستنصرية، نمذجة المعادلات الهيكلية