



The Assessment of University Students Knowledge on Academic Writing

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Abstract

This study which is entitled "The Assessment of University Students Knowledge on Academic Writing" attempts at exploring the knowledge level of university students with regard to writing in an academic style. Its primary aim is to realize whether university students have knowledge of producing and structuring ideas and thoughts in academic writing process. These two levels of writing, generation and organization of ideas, are reflected in academically written texts. Hence, the significance of the study is to urge university students to cope with the theoretical principles of academic writing. Researchers depend on questionnaire to collect data from 102 third year students in departments of English in College of Education, College of Basic Education and College of Language at Salahaddin University - Erbil. The study, first, is concerned with a brief introduction of the nature of academic writing. Then, it presents the literature review of the study. Following this, the relationship between academic reading and writing is highlighted. The study, also, lays emphasis on elements and features of academic writing. The findings of the study indicate that although students are taught academic writing, they have difficulties in various aspects of academic writing. There are clear deficiencies in their knowledge of structuring an academic text.

Keywords: Assessment, Academic Writing, Academic Reading, Structure of Writing Plagiarism.

1. Introduction

Writing is the representation of a language through symbols. It is a process whereby ideas and thoughts are conveyed. Academic writing is a type of writing which has its own features. It should be written unambiguously and well structured. It possesses a formal style and is mainly employed in universities. According to Graham (2018), one of the earliest academic skills is writing which is studied by observers who are interested in education and literacy. Thus, university students should be familiar with the writing process, its elements, and features like formality, objectivity, and originality in order to produce a precise and accurate piece of writing.

Academic writing, in contrast with creative and personal writing, is a kind of writing in which formal language must be used and informal language should be avoided. Creative writing is used for writing stories and personal writing is used for writing letters, e-mails and so forth. In this case, informal language, such as slang, abbreviations and contractions can be used in creative and personal writing; but they should not be used in academic writing. In addition, academic writing contains complete sentences that are organized in a certain way (Oshima and Hogue, 2006. P.3)

Savage and Mayer (2012) claim that [academic writing is not a display of one's fully formed thoughts. It starts with flawed, incomplete, vague hunches, ideas and concepts. It allows you to come full circle, to revisit ideas long after you first thought of them, to explore the same things in different ways to revise and to repeat all of these that are arguably central to the essence of scholarship which you exercise every day in other academic tasks.] (p. 20).



Furthermore, Baily (2006) explains that academic writing is about expressing ideas in more logical and fashionable way, and this kind of writing is expected to be precise, objective, and impersonal.

Academic writing has its own distinct organization which differs from that of non-academic texts. It is normally divided into three parts, namely an introduction, body and conclusion. The introduction is the opening paragraph where the writer should introduce the topic, provide thesis statement, and indicate the particular focus in the essay. (Zemach and Rumisek, 2005). In addition, this is where the writer has a chance to create the first impression and tell the readers what the writing is about. Furthermore, it is the key part in which the writer gives an outline of the essay and sets the scene for the main body, as well as defines important concepts and terms (Jones, 2015; Greetham, 2001).

The second part is the body which is the heart of an academic text. This part is normally divided into developmental paragraphs that should flow smoothly from one to the next. These paragraphs should support the essay topic introduced in the opening paragraph. Additionally, each body paragraph begins with a topic sentence which is an effective link to the preceding paragraph, with logical reasoning and evidence. The minor supporting ideas are linked within the paragraphs in a smooth manner. Furthermore, the writer should use evidence and examples to develop argument (Jones, 2015; Whitaker, 2009).

The conclusion is the last part which summarizes the main parts of the text by being careful not to repeat exactly what has been written before. It presents the results of the investigation which are the essay findings, and provides a solution to the problem that has been set; it also suggests further areas of investigation. (Anderson & Poole, 2001; Oshima and Hogue, 2014. 5th ed.).

2. Literature Review

Many studies on academic writing, the same as this current study, have been conducted in some other universities abroad for the degree of PhD and Master. One of the studies is done by Amin Ali Al Mubarak at the Al Imam Al Mahdi University in Sudan under the title of "An investigation of academic writing problems faced by undergraduate students at Al Imam Al Mahdi University - Sudan". The main objective of this study is to look into various challenges encountered by English Second language students in academic writing in ordinary graduation project in the context of universities. Specifically, the research focuses on identifying the problems faced by the Arts Colleges within the University of Al Imam Al Mahdi, Sudan. The researcher employs a descriptive method. This research reaches to a conclusion that many challenges regarding academic writing experienced by the students were articles, punctuation, prepositions, irregular verbs, poor expressions, consistency paralleled structure, and usage of verb tense.

Another research is carried out by Joseph Namutungika Mukoroli at the University of Namibia under the name of "An investigation of academic writing at the University of Namibia: Engendering an experiential, meaningful and critical pedagogy for English for Academic Purposes". The study aims to investigate academic writing at the University of Namibia and intends to explore whether a critical, meaningful and experiential pedagogy in EAP that enhances voice and agency in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) can be engendered in the Namibian EAP classroom. Moreover, it aims at investigating the experiences and perceptions of first year EAP students regarding the current EAP pedagogy at the University of Namibia. As instruments, the study uses a semi-structured questionnaire and academic essay administered to 200 EAP first year student- participants. The findings indicate that the current EAP pedagogy at the University of Namibia does not promote experiential,



meaningful and critical learning nor does it enhance voice and agency in the EAP classroom, thus a critical, meaningful and experiential EAP pedagogy that enhances voice and agency can be engendered in the Namibian EAP classroom. The findings also indicate that EAP students find the use of APA referencing skills and the use of discourse markers were so difficult when they engage in academic essay writing.

A study by Molly Muelezi Mutimani at the University of Namibia with the title of "Academic writing in English: challenges experienced by bachelor of education primary level students at the university of Namibia, katima mulilo campus." The study used mixed methods, explanatory and sequential designs. Questionnaires, semi-structured, individual interviews and previously marked student essays were employed as data collection instruments. The data analysis included statistical analysis of the two questionnaires, a thematic analysis of students and lecturers' interview and an integrative analysis that involved continuously checking back and forth between quantitative and qualitative findings. The findings of this study showed that they still faced various academic writing challenges. The data revealed that the academic writing challenges of students in the study were consequences of their linguistic and general literacy backgrounds, their attitudes toward academic writing and the privileging of middle-class literacy practices in Namibian higher education.

Another study has been presented by Hossein Saadabadi M. and Arshad Abdul Samad under the name of "Originality and plagiarism in scientific documentation and academic writing". This research is an interview-based investigation of how Iranian graduate students of science and engineering cite the sources they use while writing in English as a second language, and how they view academic writing and plagiarism.

To achieve these goals, this study employs qualitative procedures. It aims at showing how Iranian graduate students with a blend of cultural heritage of the east and academic heritage of the west form and treat writing from sources, textual borrowing, and plagiarism. The participants of this study were eight Iranian graduate students of science and engineering at a university in Malaysia. The study showed that the participants had no idea of what writing from sources is and for them it was equal to copying some materials and pasting them into their own work. They did not even distinguish between summary and paraphrase. Regarding plagiarism, this study showed three groups of students: those who had no idea of plagiarism, those who had a wrong view of plagiarism, and those with a favorable view that was approved, but was different from western notion of plagiarism.

The current study aims at exploring the participants' knowledge of some of the issues and elements and features of university academic writing which are central and reflective in the writing process.

3. The Relationship between academic reading and academic writing

University academic writing often requires the use of others' opinions and ideas to support compare and gather the writer's opinions. Students read to understand the worldview of the others; they write to express their ideas in the context of what they have read. However, there is a significant relationship between reading ability and writing academically among university academic writers.

Stotsky (1984) claims that "Better writers tend to be better readers", and that "better writers tend to read more than poorer writers," and finally, yet more importantly that "better readers tend to produce more syntactically mature writing than poorer readers" (P.16)

Bharuthram & Clarence (2015) stated that in higher education, writing about something normally comes from reading about something. Therefore, learners need not only to write in



an effective way, but they also need to read critically and understand the texts they use as models for their own writing.

Similarly, Llach (2010) mentioned that reading and writing are known as the literacy skills of language. And according to Krashen and Lee (2004), writers gain knowledge of the language of writing, vocabulary, grammar and style of writing from reading (p.10). In addition, better readers can have a better chance for gaining more information about written language (Motlaq and Egresh, 2016). Therefore, reading well organized pieces of writing would improve language abilities and writing schemata (Tabatabaei and Amin Ali, 2012).

Also according to Ferris and Hedgcock (2005,p.31), reading becomes the basis of writing because the information acquired through reading contains print-encoded messages as well as clues about how the messages grammatical ,lexical ,semantic ,pragmatic ,and rhetorical constitute combine to make the message meaningful. Horning and Kraemer (2013) mentions, if readers read to analyze different parts in a text, if they read different reading passages on a similar topic, if they evaluate what they read to their personal life experiences, meaning will be conveyed through the interaction of both reading and writing.

According to Grabe (2001), "reading –to –write" is a notion which implies that writers go back to resources and read them in different ways as they search for specific information and apply reading strategies "to match task expectations for the writing." (p.22).

4. Elements of Writing

To achieve more academic and unique writing, university academic writers should pay a very close attention to the elements of writing. Although there are a number of elements of writing, five of them are commonly used and are much more important than the others. The elements are unity, coherence, purpose, audience and style.

4.1. Unity

To begin, in English, unity considered as a basic element of writing that must not be ignored in writing academic papers. Unity means focusing on one main idea and it requires all supporting sentences to give explanation to and support the topic sentence. In unity, all sentences are related to the topic as well as there is no irrelevant idea or sentence that is off topic. (Zemach and Rumisek, 2005; Oshima and Hogue, 2014. 4th ed.)

4.2. Coherence

Another element of writing a well-written and a well-organized paragraph is coherence. In coherence all sentences are linked together and the information flow logically and is connected to each other in order to pave the way for the reader to be transported to the coming expressed ideas and information. (Zemach and Rumisek, 2005; Oshima and Hogue, 2014. 5th ed.). According to Oshima and Hogue (2014, 5th ed.) there are four ways to achieve coherence which are "repeat key nouns, use consistent pronouns, use transition signals to link ideas and arrange your ideas in logical order" p.26.

4.3. Purpose

Purpose is the reasons behind writing a particular piece of writing; it is the goal the writer is trying to achieve. Some writers try to teach, give information, or to inform the reader. Others are supposed to persuade the reader. They try to make the reader to be agreed with their points of view. And some texts are written to entertain the reader (Lee and Gunderson, 2011). To sum up, informing, persuading and entertaining are the reasons behind writing any text.

4.4. Audience



Another element of a good academic writing according to Lee and Gunderson (2011) is audience. Audience is always must be kept in mind during the writing process which refers to the readers. If the writer knows who the readers are, good decisions about the information as well as the language to convey the information can be made.

4.5. Style

Style is the word choice and sentence structure, according to Harvey (2009), the style of academic writing is direct and clear; it should be readable and unambiguous. The sentences are not vague or indirect and the writer gets the point across to the reader by using specific, concise language.

5. Features of academic writing

Academic writing has its own style. Thus, university academic writers should to consider these conventions in order to write a piece of academic writing appropriately. Altakhainah (2010) stated that academic writing is the kind of writing that intends to provide factual information about a subject and does not intend to entertain the reader. Similarly, the main purpose of academic texts is to explore, discover, and describe a phenomenon (English for Academic purposes Guide, 2013). Therefore, characteristics like formality, originality, objectivity, and precision should be adhered to when writing academic texts.

1. Formality

Formality is one of the characteristics of academic writing. It is one of the essential features that must be taken into consideration by university students. Davies (2008) explains that academic writing is normally written in a formal style which makes it different from other types of writing. Similarly, Baily (2006) specifies this feature and consider formality of verbs in particular. He declares that using formal verbs to convey the writer's message precisely is one of the features of most academic pieces of writing. Additionally, so as to be formal and more academic in writing, university students have to avoid some notable informal features of writing. Such as:

- **Colloquial terms:** Avoid using slang, idioms, and everyday expressions. Instead it is better to use alternative formal terms (Davies, 2008).
- **Contractions:** Means using full forms of the words; for example, *haven't* or *shouldn't* are used in spoken language, but in academic written language, they must be *have not* or *should not*. (Mutimani, 2016)
- **Rhetorical questions:** Usually direct or rhetorical questions are avoided in academic writing. (Day, 2013)
- **Run-on sentences:** Oshima and Hogue (2014. 4th ed.) explains run-on sentences as merging two simple sentences without using linking word or a comma. Run-on sentences are common in speech and other informal interactions because it is only about keep adding on to something someone wants to say. In writing, however, these run-ons become distracting and hard to follow.

2. Originality

It is another feature of academic writing, especially in writing research or thesis. Philips and Pugh (2000) state that originality is to continue an original piece of work; or to say something no one has said before. It is also to rewrite someone else's ideas in a new way with new expressions and style, and to examine the information which already exists in an original way. Consequently, according to their ideas, originality is providing new information for the first time, or doing an empirical work that has not been done before. Day (2013) says that when



someone else's speech is not restated word for word and a different opinion is represented, the work is original.

3. Precision

Precision means the chosen words need to demonstrate sufficient analysis of the issues involved, it can be argued that "by using precise wording, you can most accurately relay your thoughts." (Writers' Handbook, 2012, p. 389), it also gives the impression that the writer should not use the wrong terms and to give precise facts to support the ideas presented. Accordingly, to be precise in word choice, it is better to avoid using phrasal verbs since they are considered to be imprecise, for instance; using *be careful* instead of *watch out* is much more academic in writing (Mutimani, 2016). That is, precision and accuracy lead the text to be more readable.

4. Objectivity

Academic writing should be impersonal. Very little in academic writing requires personal opinion and if there is an opinion, it must be expressed objectively. Objectivity in academic writing, claimed Mutimani (2016), means the writer allows the facts and evidence to speak for themselves and the writer's personality is prevented to irrupt too much into the writing. To avoid being personal in writing, personal pronouns *I, you, we...* can be avoided and impersonal voice can be used instead (Day, 2013). Also, using passive voice in the place of active is another way of being objective; in addition, the pronoun *it* can be used as an empty subject; for example, *it is said / it can be argued/ that.....*

6. Plagiarism

Focusing on academic writing, plagiarism is an important topic and a great issue that must be taken into account and not to be ignored. Plagiarism is taken very seriously at university level, because university students have to write academically and give reliability to their writing; in other words they must avoid plagiarism.

Plagiarism is taking the works of others as your own, whether on purpose or unintentionally (Carroll, 2002). Similarly, Baily (2011) agrees with Carroll's point of view and believes that "plagiarism means taking ideas or words from a source without giving credit (acknowledgment) to the author. It is seen as a kind of theft, and it is considered to be an academic crime." (P.30). Likewise, University of Oxford (2007) published that plagiarism is copying or paraphrasing of other people's works or ideas into your own work. Thus, plagiarism can be defined as "using someone else's words or ideas as if they are your own, and it is a serious offence" (Oshima and Hogue, 2014, p.48).

In addition, Roberts (nd) gave some reasons behind plagiarizing by students. These reasons are: "lack of research skills; lack of writing skills; confusion about how to cite sources; poor time management and organizational skills.... etc" (p.2).

7. Methodology, Tools, Participants, and Data Collection

The practical part of this study is a questionnaire form included 17 questions about knowledge and awareness about different areas of academic writing; for example questions about structure, punctuation, formality, originality, objectivity have been asked and four options were written for each question.

This questionnaire based survey was conducted in Feb 2019 at Salahaddin University in departments of English at College of Education, College of Language and College of Basic Education. The sample population includes 3rd grade students of three mentioned colleges, the students were asked to complete the questionnaire immediately therefore 120 questionnaires were distributed but only 102 were returned completely. Convenient samples



of 40 students were chosen from each three colleges. However, 40 students participated in College of Education. As a result, 40 (%39.2) fully answered samples received back. In addition, although 40 learners participated in College of Language, but only 37 (%36.3) fully answered sheets returned back. Moreover and unfortunately, this case did not happen only in College of Language, but also the students of College of Basic Education were not cooperative enough. Out of a group of almost 50 students, only 25 (%24.5) of them accepted to do the test and the rest refused.

Data collection is the collection of quantitative data via the questionnaire survey in departments of English at College of Education, College of Language and College of Basic Education at Salahaddin University.

8. Data Analysis and Results

Data were analyzed using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) version 23. Simple descriptive analysis and frequency calculation has been done for the variables. Tables were also used to present these data with analysis and interpretation.

A total of 120 questionnaires were supposed to be distributed, but only 102 were accepted, completed and returned back. As a result, the rate was %102. Out of 18 discarded questionnaires, 3 were accepted but were not answered and returned back empty. The other 15 were not even accepted by the selected participants.

Among 17 questions in different areas of knowledge about university academic writing, the highest knowledge was about the importance of reading in academic writing with an awareness frequency of 96.1% and the lowest was related to the organization of academic writing, particularly, the position of the abstract in a piece of academic writing with an awareness frequency of 27.5%. The frequencies of awareness of the participants towards several questions are summarized in table (1).

Table 1: Frequency distribution table regarding awareness of university academic writing

Awareness regarding the questions	Frequency	(%)
Q1. University students should be familiar with the style of university academic writing.	95	(93.1)
Q2. University students must read to have better academic writing.	98	(96.1)
Q3. Unity and coherence are the most important elements of academic writing	79	(77.4)
Q4. An academic essay contains only topic sentence and concluding sentence.	65	(63.7)
Q5. Academic writing usually must not be written in passive voice.	35	(34.3)
Q6. University students should not use transition or linking words throughout their academic writing.	66	(64.7)
Q7. Colloquial terms such as slang, idioms and everyday expressions are to be avoided in academic writing.	62	(60.8)
Q8. Academic writers should be impersonal and unbiased.	64	(62.7)
Q9. Personal pronouns such as <i>I, you, we....</i> are to be avoided in academic writing.	76	(74.5)
Q10. Correct grammar, spelling and punctuation must be taken into account in academic writing.	94	(92.2)
Q11. University academic writers must not plagiarize.	86	(84.3)
Q12. Contractions must be avoided in academic writing; words must be written in their full form.	73	(71.5)
Q13. In writing academically it is alright to have run-on sentences, which means to join two simple sentences without a comma or connecting word.	42	(41.2)
Q14. In academic writing, phrasal verbs are better to be avoided.	49	(48)
Q15. Academic writers can use only paraphrasing.	69	(67.6)



Q16. The best time to write an abstract is often at the end.	28	(27.5)
Q17. Academic writers give detail points in the thesis statement.	30	(29.4)

9. The participants' responses

The participants consisted of 40 (%39.2) in the college of education, 37 (%36.3) in the college of language and 25 (%24.5) in the college of basic education. They had to choose among four options for each question. The frequencies of their responses towards the questions are summarized in table 2 below.

Table 2: Frequency distribution table regarding the participants' responses.

Questions	Strongly agree	%	Agree	%	Dis-agree	%	Not sure	%
1. University students should be familiar with the style of university academic writing.	44	43.1	51	50	5	4.9	2	2
2. University students must read to have better academic writing.	53	52	45	44.1	4	3.9	0	0
3. Unity and coherence are the most important elements of academic writing	24	23.5	55	53.9	10	9.8	13	12.7
4. An academic essay contains only topic sentence and concluding sentence.	6	5.9	13	12.7	65	63.7	18	17.6
5. Academic writing usually must not be written in passive voice.	9	8.8	37	36.3	35	34.3	21	20.6
6. University students should not use transition or linking words throughout their academic writing.	6	5.9	19	18.6	66	64.7	11	10.8
7. Colloquial terms such as slang, idioms and everyday expressions are to be avoided in academic writing.	20	19.6	42	41.2	23	22.5	17	16.7
8. Academic writers should be impersonal and unbiased.	25	24.5	39	38.2	26	25.5	12	11.8
9. Personal pronouns such as <i>I, you, we....</i> are to be avoided in academic writing.	24	3.5	52	51	21	20.6	5	4.9
10. Correct grammar, spelling and punctuation must be taken into account in academic writing.	62	60.8	32	31.4	5	4.9	3	2.9
11. University academic writers must not plagiarize.	49	48	37	36.3	9	8.8	7	6.9
12. Contractions must be avoided in academic writing; words must be written in their full form.	24	23.5	49	48	12	11.8	17	16.7
13. In writing academically it is alright to have run-on sentences, which means to join two simple sentences	8	7.8	28	27.5	42	41.2	24	23.5



without a comma or connecting word.								
14. In academic writing, phrasal verbs are better to be avoided.	9	8.8	40	39.2	36	35.3	17	16.7
15. Academic writers can use only paraphrasing.	6	5.9	16	5.7	69	67.6	11	10.8
16. The best time to write an abstract is often at the end.	10	9.8	36	35.3	28	27.5	28	27.5
17. Academic writers give detail points in the thesis statement.	19	18.6	41	40.2	30	29.4	12	11.8

10. Discussion

This questionnaire is conducted in departments of English in College of Education, College of Basic Education and College of Language at Salahaddin University. The questionnaire consists of seventeen questions which were answered by 102 third grade students.

Among seventeen questions, three of them are general questions about university academic writing. These questions have the highest percentage of awareness. Question number one has an awareness of %93.1 in which %43.1 of the students strongly agreed and %50 of them agreed that university students should be familiar with the style of university academic writing, %4.9 disagreed and %2 were not sure about it. Similarly, the frequency of awareness of question two is %96.1, from which %52 strongly agreed and %44.1 agreed that university students must read to have better academic writing and %3.9 of them disagreed. Also in question number ten, which is about grammar, spelling and punctuation the rate of knowledge among three colleges is %92.2. The total percentage of those students who strongly agreed that grammar, spelling and punctuation must be taken into account is %60.8 and those who agreed is %31.4, but %4.9 disagreed and %2.9 were not sure whether it must be or not.

The study showed that the lowest level of knowledge is related to the structure of academic writing. According to the awareness of organizing the parts of a piece of academic writing, in question number four, the level of awareness is %63.7 in which %5.9 strongly agreed, %12.7 agreed and %63.7 disagreed that topic and concluding sentences are the only parts of an academic essay. The left %17.6 had no idea about it who were not sure. However, among seventeen questions, number sixteen has the lowest rate of knowledge with an awareness frequency of %27.5. Considering the position of abstract, %9.8 strongly agreed, %35.3 agreed, %27.5 disagreed that the place of abstract is often at the end as well as %27.5 were not sure. In addition, in question number seventeen only %29.4 of the students had knowledge that academic writers do not give detail points in thesis statement, but %40.2 and %18.6 agreed and strongly agreed that writers give detail points in thesis statement, also %11.8 were uncertain about it.

The study also indicates that the frequency of awareness of elements of writing among students is %77.4. In a question about unity and coherence, %23.5 strongly agreed, %53.9 agreed and %9.8 disagreed that unity and coherence are the most important elements of writing, and also %12.7 of the students were in doubt.

Consequently, the present research shows that the students have sufficient knowledge about plagiarism. The frequency of awareness of question number eleven, which says that university academic writers must not plagiarize, is %84.3. In this point the average of strongly agreed students was %48 and of agreed students was 36.3, but %8.8 disagreed that they must not and %16.7 were not sure. Similarly, regarding how to avoid plagiarism, the frequency of



knowledge of question number fifteen is %67.6 in which %5.9 strongly agreed, %15.7 agreed with the idea that writers can use only paraphrasing when using others' works in their own writing. However, %67.8 had awareness that there are other ways, and %10.8 chose not sure option.

Moreover, considering the features of academic writing, the results are not good enough to say that students have good information about the characteristics of academic writing. For instance, in a question about using transition and linking words the rate of awareness is %64.7 in which %5.9 and %18.6 agreed and strongly agreed that transition and linking words should not be used by university students, %10.8 answered that they are unsure, but %64.7 which means more than half of the students disagreed with this statement. Also, in another question about colloquial terms, the average of awareness is only %60.8. In this question %19.6 of the learners strongly agreed and %41.2 agreed that colloquial terms should be avoided in academic writing, in contrast, %22.5 disagreed and %16.7 were not sure. The level of knowledge in question twelve about contractions is higher than other 3 questions regarding formality with a frequency of %71.5 in which %23.5 strongly agreed, %48 agreed and %11.8 disagreed that contractions in academic writing must be avoided, in addition, %16.7 were not sure. Vice versa, question thirteen has the lowest level of knowledge among the four questions according to formality with a frequency of awareness of %41.2. This question is about run-on sentences in which %7.8 and %27.5 strongly agreed and agreed that having run-on sentences in academic writing is something normal, on the contrary, %41.2 disagreed and %23.5 had no idea about it.

Furthermore, precision is also considered as a feature, the frequency of awareness of question fourteen, which is about avoiding phrasal verbs, is %48. In this question %8.8 and %39.2 strongly agreed and agreed that in order to be precise in writing phrasal verbs are to be avoided. In spite of this, %35.3 disagreed and %16.7 of the students were uncertain.

Finally, objectivity has also been taken into account as a feature of academic writing in conducting this study. Academic writing must not be written in passive voice is question number five that has a frequency of awareness of %34.3 which means less than half of the participants chose the right option. %8.8 strongly agreed, %36.3 agreed that passive voice must not be used; %20.6 were in doubt and only %34.3 disagreed with this wrong idea.

Accordingly, the level of awareness of question number eight is %62.7, in this question %24.5 of the learners strongly agreed and %38.2 agreed that writers should be impersonal, however, %25.5 disagreed and 11.8 were not sure. The last question depending on objectivity has a frequency of awareness of %74.5. Question nine is about avoiding personal pronouns; %23.5 strongly agreed, %51 agreed, %20.6 disagreed that personal pronouns are to be avoided and as always %4.9 were not sure.

To conclude, the findings of the current study reveals that the level of knowledge and awareness about university academic writing in general is moderate. It indicates that the students have the lowest level of awareness in structure of academic writing; they have problems with the features of academic writing as well. But, it seems that they have sufficient knowledge about elements of writing and plagiarism.

Conclusion

Academic writing is distinguished from other kinds of writing with its characteristics, elements, structure and its formal language. The study indicates that university students have difficulties in following these basic rules in their academic writing. The result demonstrates, English language students at university are unable to write an academic piece of writing successfully with correct use of the elements. This is proved after conducting the questionnaire, analyzing and calculating the data, which demonstrated that university students



are unable to produce an appropriate piece of academic writing and this has been come out from some main reasons; such as, the lack of students' practicing in writing, that causes a shortcoming in their knowledge about academic writing. Although students were taught academic writing in a university core module, the findings of this study shows that they still face various academic writing challenges. The data reveals that in spite of deficiency of knowledge about characteristics of academic writing, the most problematic area of academic writing for the students is the structure of an academic piece of writing. However, the participants had sufficient awareness about elements of writing and plagiarism.

The necessary to use academic skills in writing at university is perhaps the main reason why the essay format is so popular during studying at university. Moreover, compressing perceptive and clear writing is an important skill in itself, which will be productive in many aspects of life beyond university.

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Appendix

Sample of the questionnaire:

This is a test for assessing the ability of university academic writing of third grade university students of departments of English - Salahaddin University.

1. University students should be familiar with the style of university academic writing.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Not sure
2. University students must read to have better academic writing.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Not sure
3. Unity and coherence are the most important elements of academic writing.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Not sure
4. An academic essay contains only topic sentence and concluding sentence.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Not sure
5. Academic writing usually must not be written in passive voice.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Not sure
6. University students should not use transition or linking words throughout their academic writing.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Not sure
7. Colloquial terms such as slang, idioms and everyday expressions are to be avoided in academic writing.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Not sure
8. Academic writers should be impersonal and unbiased.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Not sure
9. Personal pronouns such as *I, you, we....* are to be avoided in academic writing.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Not sure
10. Correct grammar, spelling and punctuation must be taken into account in academic writing.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Not sure
11. University academic writers must not plagiarize.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Not sure
12. Contractions must be avoided in academic writing; words must be written in their full form.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Not sure
13. In writing academically it is alright to have run-on sentences, which means to join two simple sentences without a comma or connecting word.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Not sure
14. In academic writing, phrasal verbs are better to be avoided.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Not sure
15. Academic writers can use only paraphrasing.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Not sure
16. The best time to write an abstract is often at the end.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Not sure



17. Academic writers give detail points in the thesis statement.

A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Not sure

هه لسه نگاندى مەریفه قوتابى زانكۆ له باره نوسىنى ئەكادىمىيە وه

كارزان عبدالله جىزنى نازىن شىخ محمد باير

كۆلپىزى پەروەردە - بەشى زمانى كوردى/ زانكۆ سەلاھەددىن-ھەولپىر
كۆلپىزى پەروەردە - بەشى زمانى ئىنگلىزى/ زانكۆ سەلاھەددىن-ھەولپىر

پوختە

ئامانچ لەم توژىنە وهىدا كه به ناوئيشانى " هه لسه نگاندى مەریفه قوتابى زانكۆ له باره نوسىنى ئەكادىمىيە وه" به برىتیه له داينكردى نايه تمەندى و بهما گرنگه كانى نووسىنى ئەكادىمى و دركردن به ئاستى زانىنى قوتابىانى زانكۆ له پرۆسه نوسىنى ئەكادىمىدا. خستنه پرووى گرنگى خوئىندنه وهى ئەكادىمى له نووسىنى ئەكادىمىدا ئامانجىكى ترى ئەم توژىنە وهى.

توژەر پشت دەبەستە به پاپرسى به مەبەستى كۆكردنه وهى زانباريه كان له ۱۰۲ قوتابى قۇناغى سىيەمى بهشى زمانى ئىنگلىزى له هەر سەكۆلپىزى پەروەردە و كۆلپىزى پەروەردە بىيات و كۆلپىزى زمان له زانكۆ سەلاھەددىن - ھەولپىر.

وشه گرنگه كان: هەلسەنگاندىن، نووسىنى ئەكادىمى، خوئىندنه وهى ئەكادىمى، قوتابىانى زانكۆ، دزىنى ئەدەبى.

تقىيمر الكتابة الأكاديمية للجامعة للطلاب الجامعيين

كارزان عبدالله جىزنى نازەن شىخ محمد باير

كۆلپىزى پەروەردە - بەشى زمانى كوردى/ زانكۆ سەلاھەددىن-ھەولپىر
كۆلپىزى پەروەردە - بەشى زمانى ئىنگلىزى/ زانكۆ سەلاھەددىن-ھەولپىر

ملخص

هذه الدراسة بعنوان "تقىيمر الكتابة الأكاديمية للجامعة للطلاب الجامعيين" في توفير ميزات وعناصر مهمة من الكتابة الأكاديمية وتحقيق مستوى معرفة طلاب الجامعة في الكتابة الأكاديمية. يعد إظهار أهمية القراءة الأكاديمية في الكتابة الأكاديمية هدفاً آخر للدراسة. يعتمد الباحث على استبيان لجمع البيانات من 102 من طلاب السنة الثالثة في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية التربية، كلية التربية الأساسية و كلية اللغة في الجامعة صلاح الدين في اربيل.

كلمات الدالة: تقىيمر، الكتابة الأكاديمية، القراءة الأكاديمية، سرقة الأدبية.