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دراسة التماسك النحوي والمعجمي في كتابة المقالة لدى طلبة الكلية العراقيين الدارسين للغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية

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لخلاصة:

بما أن نظام اللغة العربية يختلف تماما عن اللغة الإنجليزية، فإن الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية تعتبر مشكلة بالنسبة للطلاب العرب بما فيهم الطلاب العراقيين أيضا. ومع ذلك، قد تتسع هذه المشكلة لتشمل الطَّلبة الجامعيّين. ولا تقتصرُ كتابة المقال على كتابة جملٍ صحيحةٍ، بل تستدعي التّرابط بالكتابة فيما يتعلّقُ بالمفردات والقواعد وترابط الأفكار باتّساقٍ لغويٍّ. لذا، تبحث هذه المقالة في استخدام التّرابط النحوي والمعجمي في كتابة المقالات لدى الطلاب العراقيين على المستوى الجامعي. هذه الدراسة عبارة عن تحليل أولي للبيانات للاستجابات التي تم الحصول عليها من خلال استبيانين تم إعدادهما للطلاب والمدرّسين على مستوى الجامعة. تتضمّن الدراسة خمسين طالباً كعيّنة عشوائيّة من المرحلة الثالثة في قسم اللغة الانكليزية، كلية الآداب في جامعة ذي قار. تمّ تحليل أجوبتهم وكتابتهم للمقالات بدقّة لتقديم النّتائج الأساسيّة. وتتوافق نتائج تحليل الاستبيان الثّاني الذي قُدِّم لعشرين مدرساً ومدرّسةً من اقسام اللغة الانجليزية لجامعة ذي قار مع نتائج الاستبيان الأوّل الذي أعد للطلبة مما يؤكّد نتائج هذه الورقة البحثيّة. وتُظهرُ هذه الدّراسةُ أنّ الطّلبة العراقيّون لديهم معرفةٌ جيّدةٌ بأنواع المقالات وكتابة المقالات ناهيك عن أدوات الرّبط وطرق التّرابط، بيد أنّهم يُظهرون ضعفاً في تطبيق هذه الطّرق والأدوات عند الكتابةِ.

الكلمات المفتاحيّة: التماسك النحوي، التماسك المعجمي، ، كتابة المقالة، الطّلبة العراقيّون

Investigating the Grammatical and Lexical Coherence in Essay Writing by Iraqi EFL College Students

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Abstract

As the system of Arabic language is totally different from English, writing in English is considered a problematic issue for the Arab students including the Iraqi students as well. However, this problem can extend to university levels. Writing essays include not only writing correct sentences, but entail coherence in writing related to lexis, grammar and joining ideas in a coherent way. So, this article investigates the use of the grammar and lexical coherence in writing essays by Iraqi students at university level. This study is a primary data analysis of the responses obtained by two questionnaires set for the students and teachers. The study involves fifty students selected randomly from the third grade of Department of English at the College of Arts of University of Thi-Qar in Iraq. The students' answers and writing in essays are analyzed thoroughly to give the main findings. The analysis of the other questionnaire given to twenty teachers of the Departments of English of University of Thi-Qar comes in accordance with the results of the first questionnaire which set for the students and confirms the findings of the paper.

The study reveals that Iraqi students have a good theoretical knowledge about types of essays and essay writings as well as conjunctions and coherence devices, yet they are weak in applying these devices in writing.

Keywords: grammatical coherence, lexical coherence, essay writing, Iraqi students.

Introduction

Writing is a major skill of language. Yet, it entails mastering language grammar and lexis in addition to coherence in arranging and linking the sentences. That is to say, writing requires the use of proper language, good construction of the text, adequate style and efficacy in expression (Harmer, 2007). Writing essay is somehow an advanced level of writing that has additional requirements in arranging ideas and coherence. Thus, coherence in writing essay is not only sentences that need to be correct grammatically and lexically speaking but to connect these sentences and shift smoothly to the next idea. Besides, it entails the use of the appropriate tense and conjunction in accordance with the type of essay.

However, the Iraqi students as other students whose mother tongue is Arabic face problems that hinder them from delivering a professional writing of essays in English. The differences between the Arabic and English can be a main obstacle that lessen the quality of students' writings as the two systems of languages are totally different in grammar and other linguistic basics(Abu Rass, 2015).

Notably, in writing, paragraph comes as a primary level of writing and the essay is a more developed one. Essay is defined by Zemach.and Rumisek (2005)as "a group of paragraphs written about a single topic and a certain main idea". It is also defined in NUST MISIS Writing Centre as "a way to evaluate your comprehension of certain ideas and your capability to explain and argue on a given subject of discussion" (Ethan, 2019).

As provided, the essay consists of at least "three paragraphs" and commonly the essay is a "five paragraph" as instructed in academic writing. Each essay should have the following elements:

1. Introduction is the first paragraph of the essay that introduces the main topic and includes the thesis statement which in turn encapsulates the main idea(s).

2. Body is the paragraph(s) that supports the argument and elaborates on the main idea(s).

3. Conclusion is the last paragraph that gives a summary of the essay or comment (Zemach & Rumisek, 2005).

According to its subject matter, the essay has multiple types and among them there are four main types of essay taught for university students. Ethan (2019) introduces the four types of essays with their definitions as follows:

1. Narrative Essay: It is similar to hearing someone recount an event or story through written word. The writer always presents his or her own narrative or point of view in the first person.

2. Descriptive Essay: It describes an item, location, occasion, or memory, among other things. It needs a proficiency in which a writer can greatly influence the intended audience by using only his words to paint a picture. All that is required of the writer is to arouse the reader's senses through the use of impeccable language and the conviction of their arguments.

3. Expository Essay: It is a type of essay that calls on the writer to conduct in-depth research on a topic or issue and evaluate available data, describe an idea, and clearly and succinctly explain the case. The essay should demonstrate the writer's confidence in the ideas presented and provided relevant facts, figures, and statistics as needed.

4. Persuasive or argumentative Essay: It is a type of essay that has an argument to support an idea and persuade the reader of the writer's point of view.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Coherence and cohesive devices

In fact, the essay should have a main idea(s) and connect ideas. For that, coherence is required in the academic writing of the essay. Coherence is not just a word; it entails requirements such as using cohesive devices. Therefore, when the ideas are connected and arranged in an understandable and logical way, they are called "coherent" (Zemach & Rumisek, 2005). Relatively, Silvia(2015) refers to coherence as "the textual world, i.e. the configuration of concepts and relations which underlie the surface text". Hence, coherence in writing essay is a must that the reader can perceive the meaning and feel interested in the writing.

Additionally, coherence in essay writing requires the use of "cohesive devices" which are defined as "words and phrases that connect sentences and paragraphs together, creating a smooth flow of ideas" (Zemach & Rumisek, 2005). There are two types of cohesive devices: those related to lexical cohesion and those used for grammatical cohesion. According to Silvia (2015) cohesive devices are explained as follows:

1. Grammatical cohesive devices:

- Reference: It happens when one word or phrase in text refers to another point or thing to find its meaning.

e.g. 1- This boy is very nice. His mother is my teacher. (His refers to the boy)

- Substitution and Ellipsis: Substitution means that one word is replaced by another and ellipsis means that one word is omitted without replacement.

e.g. 2- My dress is old. I have to get a new one. (substitution)

     - My old dress is very nice. I do not think I can find a nicer. (ellipsis)

- Conjunction: It is a way for specifying what follows as it is connected to the previous sentence or phrase. They comprise additive tools such as: and, in addition to , besides, furthermore, etc., causal tools such as: so, consequently, therefore, etc., adversative tools such as: but, on the other hand, etc., temporal tools such as: then, after that, finally, secondly, lastly, etc.

e.g. 3- George was late. However, he could join the dinner.

2. Lexical cohesive devices:

- Reiteration: It refers to the repetition of the lexical item or the incidence of its synonym. Hence it includes repetition, synonym and hyperonym.

e.g. 4- The child found a snake. The snake might hurt him. (repetition)

     5 - The child found a snake. The serpent might hurt him. (synonym)

     6 - The child found a snake. The animal might hurt him. (hyperonym)

- Collocation: It is the association of a word in the text with another one in the previous text.

e.g. 7- There was a country which was rich.

     8- The king was called Arthur.

     9 - The queen was called Merry.

There is a collocation between "country, king and queen" as they are related to each other.

Thus, grammatical and lexical coherence can be achieved in essay writing not only by the correct writing in relation to grammar, spelling and punctuation, but also by joining ideas in a logical and meaningful way.

On the other hand, "lexical cohesive devices" which can be stated by Bolinger (1968) as they are the connections between the meanings of different words. Murphy (2003: 8) states that lexical cohesive devices are forms of a relation of connecting between two or more objects containing reiteration, synonymy, antonymy, polysemy, hyponymy and collocation.

Moreover, Yule (2010); Zakiyah, 2018); Ghazala(1995)analyzed five main types of lexical relations , as follows:

- Hyponymy refers to a word that contains the meaning of a more general word, known as, 'superordinate', for example a "hyponym" of the superordinate tree is oak.

- Synonymy is the sameness of meaning. In other words, it is the similarity of meaning between two words that is not connected to the intellectual meaning of the words but rather to the relationships between words that have the same conceptual meaning. Examples are an elevator and a lift, a gala and a celebration, or Marvis and a thrush .

- Antonymy is the meaning's antithesis as two words are antonyms if their meanings only differ in the value of a single semantic property. There are three different types of antonymy: relational opposites, complementarity, and gradeable antonymy. In gradable antonymy, each word's meaning is relative and can be placed on a scale that is not fixed, for instance: narrow/wide, silent/ noisy. Whereas, complementarity, refers to the word's meaning as it is absolute rather than relative like Male and female, single and married, dead and alive and the like. While, relational opposites represent the reversal of a word relationship such as buying and selling, lending and borrowing.

- Homonymy is the term used to describe one form that has two or more meanings that are unconnected and is the same in spoken and written form such as bank (of a river/ of a financial institution), leaf (of a tree/of a book), mole (an animal/a small dark mark on the skin), bill (a bird's mouth/a statement of chargers), and so on.

- Polysemy is the term that refers to a word. It has a set of different meanings which are related. For example: step(stage/ a platform of the theatre), sound(voice,/ probe/air bladder, public opinion surveys, etc.).

2.2 Related Studies

It is beneficial to explore the studies done on writing essays and general writing of not only Iraqi students, but Arab students on a large scale. The role of the English teachers in the Arab world was highlighted by Byram (2000) and Gass and Selinker (2008) who asserted that those teachers should explain the differences between the two languages.

The problems that Arab students have in writing in English were sorted out by Lakkis and Abdel Malak (2002) in a study done on Egyptian students as these were related to join sentences together and organize ideas. Alsamadni (2010) dwelled on the importance of the strategy of "mind mapping" for the students as well as teachers in language acquisition process in a study that on students came from Saudi Arabia and were studying in a Malaysian University.

Ali (2012) investigated the difficulties that Iraqi students had in paragraph writing at the University of Baghdad. The findings of the study revealed that the Iraqi students showed weaknesses and problems related to grammar and coherency. Jasim (2012) probed the causes of these poor capacities in writings among Iraqis. These were ascribed to the lack of practice on the part of the learners in writing and disabilities of teachers to improve the writing skills. Reishaan (2013) clarified that the Iraqi students' mistakes in writings such as the wrong use of verb tenses of the verbs, were due to mother-tongue interference. That study was done on Iraqi students in at the University of Kufa.

On the other hand, concerning the ability of writing by Arab students, Fareh (2013) explored the macro linguistic errors committed by those students in writing essays which related to reference use or overuse of some references, poor paragraph writing, tense inadequacy and lack of coherence. Abu Rass (2015) reported that the students used to face problems in writing long sentences and use of proper conjunction. They also repeated ideas and gave unnecessary explanation without being able to get to the point. According to Abu Rass, the students' problems could be ascribed to mother-tongue interference.

Fear and lack of confidence in writings can be a crucial issue that hinders good writings. Yahya (2017) elaborated on the difficulties that Iraqi University students met in writing composition. The study that was done on a sample of 100 second year Iraqi students from English Department at the College of Basic Education, Diyala University, was concluded by asserting that the Iraqi students had two major problems which were loss of confidence in their writing and fear.

Nasser (2019) did a study on difficulties that Iraqi EFL university students face in writing composition. The study that contained a sample from the Department of English, College of Women for Women at University of Baghdad, was concluded by asserting that

Iraqi students used to make errors related to mother-tongue interference in writing. They had grammatical, punctuation and spelling errors. Moreover, they showed weakness in sentence structure and arranging paragraphs. The researcher emphasized the necessity to change the tools of teaching and depend on visual aids and guided exercises with repetitions, group work and c to cultivate the skill of writing for Iraqi students due to its great importance.

Mohammad et al. (2020) traced the Iraqi students' views of writing in English via a questionnaire given to 80 Iraqi students at the College of Education and Humanities, University of Anbar. The study showed that the difficulties that students faced in writings were due to the lack of suitable assistance and guidance from the part of teachers. Their writings revealed weaknesses in grammar, time arrangement and understanding of the techniques used in writing. Their mistakes also revealed the strong impact of mother-tongue interference on their writings.

Accordingly, the literature review asserts the necessity to explore this obscure area of grammatical and lexical coherence in writing essays by Iraqi students. The conducted study should also present solutions to overcome the difficulties that Iraqi students have in writing and cultivate their skills. Therefore, the research bridges the gaps of the previous studies by digging into this problem.

3. Methodology

This study is a descriptive one to investigate the Iraqi university students' competence in writing essays and to explore the grammatical and lexical coherence in their writings. So, it is exploratory study as well. However, it analyzes the two questionnaires given to students and teachers. It has two random samples where the first sample consists fifty students from the Department of English of College of Arts of University of Thi-Qar in Iraq. While the second sample contains 20 teachers of English from the Departments of English of the same University.

The students' responses to the questions and tasks of the first questionnaire are analyzed and compared with the teachers' answers of the questions in the second questionnaire. These responses are gathered and analyzed in a primary data analysis as the next chapter reveals.

3.1 Discussion & Findings

The first questionnaire is of two parts, theoretical and practical questions. The answers of the students to this test come according to each question as follows:

Table (1): The results of question 1

Students No.	Four types	%	Three types	%	Two types	%
50	38	76	5	10	7	14

The answers of the students to the first question which tests their theoretical knowledge of the four major types of essays are relatively good. However, it is not right/ wrong question as the students have knowledge about the essay types. The answers reflect the good knowledge of the types of essay with 76% correct answers.

Table (2): The results of question 2

Students No.	right	%	Almost true	%
50	13	26	37	74

The answers of this question that is specified to check the students' knowledge of the cohesive devices which they are grammatical or lexical ones, show weakness in the students' perception of these devices. The students' confusion can be traced in their answers. As it is recorded that they showed bewilderment in the classification of these devices according to their types. The percentage of the correct answers is only 26%. Hence, the students need to get more information regarding lexical and grammatical devices. The teachers should exert more efforts to widen the students' knowledge of these important devices and make them proficient in their uses. Besides, the curriculum only seems poor in concentrating on this important issue in composition and linguistics

Table (3): The results of question 3

Students No.	Item No.	right	%	wrong	%
50	1	23	46	27	54

2	38	76	12	24
3	9	18	41	82
4	15	30	35	70
5	31	62	19	38

Question 3 which is a right/ wrong question reveals that the levels of the students range is between intermediate and very good. The answers reveal that the students somehow have a proficiency in distinguishing the devices according to the given sentences. The answers to the first item fall into 46% as correct and 54% as wrong. This proves that the students have confusion in using the necessary and unnecessary "repetition". The responses to the following items show better understanding, especially in no. 2 and no. 5 as the percentage of correct answers in each of these two items exceeds 50%. This reveals that the students have a good knowledge about ellipsis as a grammatical device and collocation as a lexical device with its definition and use.

Table (4): The results of question 4

Students No.	Item No.	right	%	wrong	%
50	1	34	68	16	32
	2	9	18	41	82
	3	4	8	46	92
	4	43	86	7	14
	5	46	92	4	8

Question 4 entails rewriting sentences by applying the appropriate grammatical or lexical devices. The required devices in this question are adding, deleting, correcting. Changing the sentence is also required when needed. This question tests the practical knowledge of the students along with the theoretical one. Most of the students show a failure in the correct use of" deleting" as they deleted improper words such as tomorrow. Some of them deleted all repeated words. This shows miscomprehension of the "deletion" device and how to use it correctly. However, they show a greater failure in answering item no. 3 where the most appropriate conjunction is "besides"; but the students have used "and" or "in addition to". Only 4 students have given the right answer. The percentage of successful answers to item no.

4 comes as 86% which indicates that the students know well the meanings of the word and its synonyms. Likewise, they show a good knowledge of antonyms as they know the meaning of the original word in item no. 5 and the percentage comes as 92% correct answers.

Table (5): The results of question 5 - part 1

Students No.	Grammatical devices	using	%	Not using	%	Lexical devices	using	%	Not using	%
50	substitution	0	0	50	100	Repetition	0	0	50	100
	Ellipsis	0	0	59	100	Synonymy	0	0	50	100
	References	48	96	2	4	Antonymy	0	0	50	100
	conjunctions	43	86	7	14	variation	0	0	50	100
	punctuation	50	100	0	0	collocation	0	0	50	100

The most important part of the questionnaire is the practical one to evaluate the students' writing as it is of great significance of using grammatical and lexical devices in writing to make the essay logical and attractive through connected ideas to be read. In this question the students are asked to write an essay about 'a city they have memories in'. The checked essays of the students show weakness in the students' use of lexical and grammatical cohesive devices. However, the responses of the students reveal hardly use of these devices. The percentage comes as 0% for using lexical cohesive devices as nobody has used any device like repetition, synonymy, antonymy, variation or collocation. The use of grammatical devices has been restricted to only references with a great percentage of 96%, conjunctions with 86% and punctuation with 100%. Even their use of conjunctions and punctuations has not been totally correct just for specific devices and marks that the students used.

The students' inclination to use these devices can be ascribed to their mother-tongue interference as writing in Arabic entails a lot of connections between sentences and use of conjunctions. The students have relied greatly on conjunctions such as: ' because, as, when, so 'and most of them have correctly used the full stop only (.) with a lot of mistakes in using the comma (,) and seldom uses of other punctuation marks that have been used incorrectly most of the time. Most of the students have used references such as subject pronouns such as: he, they, it, etc. and possessive adjective and possessive pronouns such as: his, their, theirs, etc. Yet none of them have used ellipsis or substitution. This indicates that there is a need to reassess the methods of teaching and clarify these devices to the students in a better way with guided practice of their use in writing.

Table (6): The results of question 5- part 2

Students No.	Good writing	%	Acceptable writing	%	Unacceptable writing	%
50	11	22	16	32	23	46

The assessment of the students' writings reveals that only 22% of them have acceptable writings. The missed logical transference in their writings, the incorrect uses of the tenses and punctuation and the lack of coherence reveal their weak skills in writing. These can be ascribed to mother tongue interference as previous studies tackled in literature review concluded. Some of the students have used two or three tenses incorrectly when the text needs only one tense. They also rely heavily on the future tense even though the essay is about memory that entails narration of past events. Many students have committed deadly mistakes in grammar, particularly the proper use of the verb with the third person singular that needs (s) in simple present tense. There have been remarkable spelling mistakes. There have been no use of lexical devices and non perfect use of grammatical devices that have also shown mistakes.

The good writing of the checked essays could only be for the essays void of spelling and grammatical mistakes with little use of grammatical devices. The acceptable writing has been for few essays with few grammatical and spelling mistakes and some correct uses of conjunctions and punctuations. However, the unacceptable writing with 46% has shown a little if any coherence with abundance of deadly grammatical as well as spelling mistakes. These results come in accordance with the previous studies that reveal the poor writing in composition for Iraqi students particularly and Arab students on a larger scale.

The second questionnaire is allotted for the teachers of composition and literary courses of Departments of English of University of Thi-Qar. It is set to assert or refute the results of the first questionnaire as the teachers can evaluate the achievement of their students long term of the academic year. The results come as follows:

Table (7): The results of question1

Total No.	Teacher no.	Answer No.	%.

20	1	40 of 50	80
	7	28 of 50	35
	5	13 of 50	25
	7	11 of 50	35
total	20		100

The teachers ask to state the number of students out of a selected sample up to 50 that have a proficiency in the writing skills in composition, essay and written exercises. The answers of the teacher have revealed remarkable weaknesses in the students' writing competency. Only one teacher has reported 80% of the students to have the writing skills; whereas 14 teachers have given a percentage of 35% and 5 have presented 25% as a percentage of proficient students. The results come in accordance with the practical question of the first questionnaire that has tested the students' writing skills and shows them to be mostly weak.

Table (8): The results of question 2

Teacher No.	Item a.	%	Item b.	%
20	13	65	7	35

As the teachers have been asked to give a number of their students in the sample that could distinguish between the types of essay, their responses come in accordance with the results of the question that probes the students' ability to distinguish between them. The teachers have reported 65% of students who have knowledge in the types of essays and can distinguish between them. However, the percentage of the students that the first question in questionnaire 1 has revealed is approximately matching with 76%.

Table (9): The results of question 3

Teacher No.	Item No.	Answer No.	%
20	a	8	40
	b	0	0
	c	0	0
	d	0	0

	e	12	60
total			100

The teachers' answers to this question that seeks to identify the most errors that students may commit of grammar, spelling, using of conjunctions, punctuation marks or all of these reveal the weakness of the students' skills in writing. The majority of the answers show weaknesses in all of these skills. These results go with the practical part of first questionnaire that reveals weakness in the students' spelling and grammar as well as misuse of correct conjunctions and punctuation that get a percentage of 46% of weak writings and 32% of moderate writings.

Table (10): The results of question 4:

Teacher No.	Item No.	Answer No.	%
20	a	13	65
	b	4	20
	c	1	5
	d	2	10
Total		20	100

The answers to this question are collected to identify the reason behind the students' poor performances in writing. Most of the answers with 65% ascribe the weakness to the students' low educational level and their failure in developing themselves academically speaking. However, 20% of them attribute the weakness to the chosen textbook *Essay and Letter Writing* by L.G. Alexander, that they view not sufficient in addition to its scattered details which make the students get confused and unable to understand the information. Only few teachers with 5% ascribe this weakness to teachers who do not realize the adequacy and importance of essay writing in developing the students' writing. The percentage of 10% of the teachers has chosen all of these factors.

Table (11): The results of question 5:

Teacher No.	Item No.	Answer No.	%
20	a	11	55
	b	1	5
	c	0	0

	d	7	35
	e	1	5
total		20	100

In checking the teachers' suggestions about the useful method that can develop the students' writing, most of them have chosen item no. (a) which concerns with asking the students to write composition with guiding grammar lessons in addition to lessons on writing essays in all stages. None of the teachers have suggested asking the students to write essays by surfing the internet and check samples, while 5% of them have suggested encouraging them to participate in a festival of essay, poem, and short story of the English language, whether at the department, college, university, or community level. However, 35% of them have chosen to show the students sample of essays and check their writings with feedback review to them. Only 5% of the teachers have suggested all of those suggestions.

To sum up the main findings, the analysis of the results of the first questionnaire which has been set for the students including four theoretical questions and one practical exercise, it is concluded that the students perform better in questions that have choices that help them or right/ wrong questions. The students have a good knowledge regarding the theoretical rules of writing essays but they have shown weakness in practice. The students could realize the types of essays and cohesive devices with a good percentage that shows their levels to be good or even very good in some parts of the questions. Yet, their writings never cater to the good level of writing essays. They show poor writing of essay with little skills in outlining the essay and linking the ideas. The majority of them have grammatical and spelling mistakes as well as punctuation mistakes. Despite their intermediate performance in using the reference and ellipsis as cohesive devices, they show weakness in the use of other devices, let alone the abundant mistakes they have committed in writing. The second questionnaire comes to confirm the results of the first questionnaire as most of the teachers have reported weaknesses in the students' writing and use of lexical as well as grammatical devices.

Conclusion

According to the analysis of the results, the practical questions reveal that the students' levels range is between weak and intermediate in writing. Besides, the analysis of this question shows that the students have a lot of grammatical and lexical mistakes. They even hardly use the devices of coherence. Therefore, the students' skills in essay writing do

not cater to the requirements of proficient writing. Thus, this research also presents solutions according to the analysis of the questionnaires and suggestions of the teachers of ESL/ EFL. The solutions mostly emphasize the importance of practice and practical activities in writing as well as guiding the students in these activities. Hence, the responsibilities of cultivating the students writing not only rest with the curriculum, courses and class periods and numbers, but also rest with practical exercises and guided writing that should be conducted by the teachers.

In conclusion, the theoretical knowledge in language grammar and lexicography is not enough to master the skills of writing, especially in essay writing. This entails a proficiency in grammar, lexicography and coherence skills for linking words and forming sensible essays. This study reveals the weakness in the Iraqi students' writings of essays and their limited abilities to use grammatical and lexical devices. In fact, the results of the study come in accordance with the previous studies made on Iraqi students in particular, and Arab students in general and revealed their weak competency in writing composition.

Recommendations

As the scope and limitation of the this study is restricted to a random sample of fifty students and twenty teachers from the departments of English at the University of Thi-Qar, hindered the researcher from collecting data from other Iraqi universities. Yet, this study gives thorough ideas about the Iraqi college students' skill in writing essay. Relatively, it can be the basis for future papers that investigate the skills of the students in other departments and universities. Furthermore, linguistic elements other than those investigated in this study can be searched in advanced research. The study suggests that the Iraqi teachers should reconsider the curriculum of composition and books assigned for study. Additionally, it highlights mostly the role of the teacher in pushing the students forward by guided exercises and practices on writing as well as a good clarification of the concept of coherence in writing essays and the proper uses of cohesive devices with examples. Therefore, it is recommended to focus on the practical tasks of guided writing will improve the students' skills.

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Appendix

Questionnaire 1:

   It has a test that needs two hours to be answered. It is set to examine the performance of the students in limited cohesive devices of grammatical and lexical kinds, such as: substitution, references, ellipsis, conjunctions, synonymy, antonymy, repetition, variation, and collocation. The test consists of two parts, theoretical and practical ones as follows**:**

Q1: Name the four main types of essays.

Q2: Classify the following cohesive devices according to their types as grammatical or lexical devices:

Repetition- references – synonyms – antonyms – substitution – conjunctions – variations – ellipsis – collocation – punctuation

Grammatical devices	Lexical devices

Q3: Answer with right or wrong:

1. <u>The experiment</u> involved three participants. Each person <u>said</u> <u>the experiment</u> was a success. I believe <u>the experiment</u> was a failure. (necessary repetition)

2. Ellipsis is a type of economical reduction of utterance to avoid unnecessary repetition.

3. The omitted words are replaced by: (three dots, dashes, slashes) .

4. There is no problem to start a sentence with conjunction .

5. There is no rule for collocation. It is simply to master the combination of words as it can be made up by any kind of words such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs.

Q4: Re-write the following sentences by applying the appropriate grammatical or lexical devices. Adding, deleting, correcting, and changing may be required:

1. "Tomorrow is the day of final exam. Please make sure you arrive to the exam tomorrow on time" . (use ellipsis)

2. "Old movies are boring, the new movies are much better."(use substitution).

3. ……………… being beautiful, she is also smart. (use conjunction)

4. "We need a new <u>couch</u>." - "I saw a nice <u>…….</u>… at the store yesterday."(fill the blank with the nearest choice: chair, armchair, sofa).

5. "The world will hardly note or long <u>remember</u> what we say here, but it can never ………………… what they did here" (fill the blank with the antonymous meaning for underlined word)

Q5: Write an essay of no more than 150 words to reveal your view point about 'A City You Have Memories in' using lexical and grammatical devices as possible as you could. Be careful of spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Questionnaire 2:

This part of the questionnaire is concerned with collecting information from the teachers about writing composition, essay, and writing in literary lessons. It is set for the teachers of composition and essay writing in particular and for the teachers of literature in general.

1. Evaluate how many students of yours have proficiency in writing essay, composition, and the written performance of the other lessons. The answer should include at least (50) students and assess them in terms of grammar, spelling, and the smooth transmission. write the number of the sample and the number of proficient students as 50, 45, 40, 35,… 10, 5, and so on …………………………

2. Do all your students know and distinguish between the types of essays and their outlines?

a. Many of them   b. only few students

3. Where do the most errors that students commit occur?

a. grammar   b. spelling   c. using conjunctions d. punctuation e. all of the previous points.

4. What is the defect in the poor performances of the students' writing?

a. the students' low educational level and not developing themselves academically.

b. the chosen textbook *Essay and Letter Writing* by L.G. Alexander is not sufficient in addition. to its scattered details which make the students get confused and unable to understand the information.

c. Some teachers do not realize the adequacy and importance of essay writing in developing the students' writing.

d. All of the previous reasons.

5. What is the useful method to develop the students' writing:

a. To ask the students to write composition with guiding grammar lessons in addition to lessons on writing essays in all stages.

b. To encourage them to participate in a festival of essay, poem, and short story of the English language, whether at the department, college, university, or community level.

c. To ask the students to write essays by surfing the internet and check samples.

d. To show the students sample of essays and check their writings with feedback review to them.

e. All of the above cited methods are useful.