

Creativity in Iraqi EFL University Students' Writing Performance**Researcher. Zainab Tayyeh Ehaimed AL-Mamouri**bas911.zanab.tayeh@student.uobabylon.edu.iq**Prof. Dr. Chassib Fanukh Abbas AL-Jubouri**qadisiyah.oe.centero@gmail.com**University of Babylon/College of Basic Education****الإبداع وعلاقته بالأداء الكتابي لدى طلبة الجامعة العراقيين الدارسين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية****الباحثة. زينب تايه احمد إبراهيم العموري أ.د. جاسب فنوخ عباس الجبوري****جامعه بابل / كلية التربية الأساسية****المخلص**

تكشف هذه الدراسة العلاقة بين الإبداع والأداء الكتابي لدى طلاب جامعة بابل العراقيين الذين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تهدف الدراسة بشكل أساسي إلى تحديد مستوى الإبداع لدى هؤلاء الطلاب ودراسة العلاقة بينهما. يركز البحث على طلاب وطالبات قسم اللغة الإنجليزية خلال العام الدراسي، مستخدمًا مقياسًا للإبداع واختبارًا للأداء الكتابي كأدوات للتقييم. تشير النتائج إلى متوسط درجة إبداعية معنوية بلغ ١٠٥.٧٢، متجاوزًا المتوسط الافتراضي البالغ ٩٠، ووجود ارتباط إيجابي قوي ($r = 0.612$) بين الإبداع والأداء الكتابي. تشير هذه النتائج إلى أن مستويات الإبداع العالية ترتبط بتحسين مهارات الكتابة. وفي الختام، تسلط الدراسة الضوء على أهمية تعزيز الإبداع في سياقات تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لتحسين الأداء الكتابي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: إبداع، كتابة، طلبة، جامعة، عراقي، لغة، إنجليزية.

Abstract

This study explores the relationship between creativity and writing performance among Iraqi EFL university students at the University of Babylon. The primary aims are to identify the level of creativity among these students and to examine the correlation between their creativity and writing performance. The research focuses on male and female students from the English Department during the academic year 2024-2025, utilizing a creativity scale and a writing performance test as instruments for assessment. Results indicate a significant mean creativity score of 105.72, surpassing the hypothetical mean of 90, and a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.612$) between creativity and writing performance. These findings suggest that higher creativity levels are associated with enhanced writing skills. In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of fostering creativity in EFL contexts to improve writing performance.

Keywords: Creativity, writing, students, university, Iraqi, language, English.

Introduction

1.1 Problem of the Study and its Significance

The relationship between creativity and writing performance in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context has garnered significant attention in recent years. Writing, a complex cognitive task, involves not only language proficiency but also the ability to generate and organize ideas effectively (Graham & Perin, 2007). For EFL university students, the challenge of expressing thoughts in a second language can be compounded by their limited linguistic resources and cultural references. This raises the question: how does creativity influence their writing performance? Creativity, often defined as the ability to produce original and valuable ideas (Runco & Jaeger, 2012), may enhance students' writing by enabling them to approach topics in innovative ways and engage more deeply with their subject matter.

Despite the acknowledged importance of creativity in writing, empirical studies exploring this relationship in EFL settings remain scarce. Most existing research focuses predominantly on native speakers or general educational frameworks, neglecting the unique challenges faced by EFL learners. For instance, studies by Cheng (2014) highlight the need for creative pedagogies in language learning, yet they do not delve into specific outcomes related to writing performance. This lack of targeted research creates a gap in understanding how fostering creativity can directly benefit EFL students' writing skills, ultimately impacting their academic success and confidence in using the language.

Moreover, the interplay between cultural factors and creativity in EFL contexts complicates this relationship further. Different cultures may have varying perceptions of creativity, which can influence students' willingness to express themselves freely in writing (Zhang & Wang, 2010). For instance, students from collectivist societies may prioritize conformity over originality, potentially stifling their creative expression in writing tasks. Understanding these cultural nuances is crucial for developing effective teaching strategies that nurture creativity and improve writing performance among diverse EFL student populations.

Furthermore, understanding this relationship can contribute to the theoretical framework surrounding language acquisition and creative expression. It can provide insights into how creativity can be operationalized in writing tasks and assessments, offering a more holistic approach to evaluating EFL students' performance. By incorporating creative elements into writing curricula, educators can help students develop a more nuanced understanding of language as a tool for expression rather than merely a set of grammatical rules (Hyland, 2016).

1.2 Aims of The Study

This study aims at:

1. Identifying the level of creativity among university students who study English as a foreign language.

2. Finding out the relationship between Iraqi EFL students' creativity and their writing performance.

1.3 Questions of The Study

The present study will try to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of creativity among university students who study English as a foreign language?
2. Is there any relationship between Iraqi EFL students' creativity and their writing performance?

1.4 Limits of The Study

The current study limits to male and female students of the English Department at the University of Babylon, College of Basic Education, for the academic year 2024-2025 in the morning study and for all stages.

1.5 Value of The Study

It is hoped that the results of this research will be valuable to:

1. Educators to provide insights into effective teaching strategies that integrate creativity into writing instruction, fostering a more engaging learning environment.
2. Curriculum developers to inform the design of curricula that prioritize creativity, encouraging project-based and collaborative learning to enhance writing skills.
3. Students to embrace their unique voices, increasing motivation and confidence in their writing abilities in a foreign language.

1.6 Definition of the Basic Terms

1.6.1 Creativity: The process of combining existing elements in new and in creative ways to produce something unique and imaginative. (Gotz,1981). Creativity can be operationally defined as the number of new and unique ideas generated within a specific time frame, measured by the quantity and quality of original solutions or expressions produced (Crystal, 2003).

1.6.2 Writing performance: refers to the act of producing written content or text with a high level of skill, creativity, and effectiveness (Archibald 2001). Writing Performance can be operationally defined as the ability of an individual to effectively convey ideas, thoughts, or information through written language, demonstrating proficiency in areas such as grammar, vocabulary, organization, coherence (Ala'a, 2018).

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 The Concept of Creativity

According to Cropley (2020), creativity may be found in a variety of disciplines, including business, manufacturing, technology, medical, administration, education, and even military. It is not limited to fine art, literature, performing arts, music, and other comparable artistic realms. Its products include concepts, processes, services, and systems for production, distribution, and operation in addition to tangible objects like

buildings, machines, and devices and intangibles like books, music, and artwork. Being creative means doing these chores in ways that are both novel and effective in achieving the desired result.

Both creativity and intelligence require labor and knowledge, but they are not the same thing. The same is true for creativity and problem-solving. Another way to describe creativity is as a social phenomenon that is facilitated by some social conditions and impeded by others. The workplace is a significant social context where interactions between individuals and their surroundings impact the innovation process. Individually, creativity is described as a component of thought, as a constellation of personality traits, and as a combination of motivation, personal qualities, and thought processes. Numerous paradoxes arise from this relationship, as creativity requires seemingly incompatible parts to coexist (Cropley, 2020).

2.2 Stages of Creativity

There are four stages of Creativity:

1. **Preparation:** Information collecting is the main goal of the first stage. Conducting user research and cultivating empathy are essential at this point in order to pinpoint the problem and comprehend user requirements. Some people think that creative ideas just happen on their own without any effort, even though they are fundamentally answers to a need or issue. You use a variety of ideation tools to completely understand, tackle, and develop your design challenge and creative ideas from numerous angles (Sawyer, 2012).
2. **Incubation:** This phase involves removing yourself from the issue to give your thoughts the space they need to roam, encouraging introspection and problem-solving. You may cultivate your subconscious thinking process, for instance, by being receptive to the thoughts that come to you while taking a stroll or doing the dishes. You let all thoughts to come to you, even the crazy ones (Sawyer, 2012).
3. **Illumination:** Illumination is much more than a fleeting moment of light; it is a milestone that can be deliberately pursued and nurtured, as evidenced by the fact that it has been acknowledged as its own stage. Although anybody may learn to control and develop the process of creativity, this third stage is frequently seen as the hallmark of a creative individual (Sawyer, 2012).
4. **Verification/implementation:** In this fourth step, you evaluate, analyze, and refine your notion in order to further improve your solution. You hone it to make sure it stays both creative and useful. In order to confirm that your concept satisfies the user criteria established during the planning stage, you may also decide to test and prototype it at this point. If the prototype works, you keep improving the solution as necessary (ibid.).

2.3 The Effect of Creativity in Writing

The ability to solve problems in new and valuable ways that are relevant to goals that have original and creative thoughts on anything to create new learning

opportunities is what Richard (2013), quoting Ozlem (2016), defines as creativity. Students that are innovative can easily break down a challenge throughout the learning process.

According to Eva (2014), creativity is important in schooling. due to the fact that educational institutions encourage creativity as a necessary 21st-century skill. On the other hand, four teachable abilities—fluency, adaptability, originality, and elaboration—promote creativity in the writing process. Fluency is one of the skills needed to come up with a lot of unique writing ideas. It helps arrange words into phrases and sentences into paragraphs in a foreign language (Fredericks 2005).

Written fluency, as defined by Alisaari and Heikkola (2017), is the ability to produce words in written text or the length of a text at a regular speed without pauses. Pei et al. (2017) define flexibility as the ability to make connections between seemingly unrelated concepts in perceiving perceptions. Additionally, originality refers to the ability to come up with new ideas when writing. Elaboration, which entails some degree of originality, is the ability to develop an idea until it is well-formed (Fredericks, 2005). How ideas are generated by the writers and how the work is published. The creativity of the writers will influence it. The study's objectives, however, were to ascertain whether or not creativity might have a substantial influence on students' writing and whether or not the teacher's creativity was successful.

2.4 Writing Skill

Writing is important since it is frequently used in both business and higher education, claims Walsh (2010). Students who are unable to express themselves clearly in writing will struggle to communicate with classmates, teachers, employers, and pretty much everyone else. Among the many written messages that a college student or new graduate encounters on a daily basis are proposals, memoranda, reports, applications, first interviews, emails, and more.

Writing has a distinctive role in language training as it necessitates practice and understanding of the other three language skills—speaking, reading, and listening. It also calls for the mastery of other skills, such metacognition. Students are required to choose a goal, think carefully about its structure and logical flow, modify it, and so on. Students must use their cognitive skills when writing; they must assess their sources and then synthesize them into a concise essay. One of the best ways to get children interested in writing is to let them write as freely as possible from the beginning of the learning process and to support their originality. Evidently, the growth of writing abilities may be greatly aided by creative writing (Janikova, 2005; Zajicova, 2011; or Rico, 1984).

For instance, Maley (2009) highlights the following advantages of creative writing:

1. It supports the development of language at all levels, including discourse, phonology, grammar, and vocabulary.

2. It challenges students to use language in engaging and challenging ways as they try to convey highly individual meanings.
3. It necessitates a readiness to experiment with language.
4. It focuses more on the right side of the brain, emphasizing emotions, bodily sensations, intuition, and musicality; and it provides flexibility for students who are typically at a disadvantage in the conventional procedures of formal education.

3. Methodology and Procedures

3.1 Population and Sample

The present study limits by the students of the College of Basic Education, English Department, at the University of Babylon. The data obtained from the registration department, where the research community consisted of 371 individuals, both male and female, with 188 male students and 183 female students distributed across four stages of the morning study. A sample select at a rate of (67%) from the total number of students from all stages. This amount represented (250) of these students, both male and female, it's chosen by using stratified random sampling with proportional distribution, consisting of (127) male students and (123) female students selected from the total population for the present study.

3.2 Instruments

3.2.1 Questionnaire Creativity

The scale consists of (30) items, each with five alternatives (always applies, often applies, sometimes applies, rarely applies, and never applies), with scores given as (5, 4, 3, 2, 1) respectively. As for the negative items, scores are given as (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) respectively. The creativity scale (Torrance ,1984) is adopted for this study.

3.2.2 Writing Performance Test

The writing performance test is considered one of the effective means to measure students' writing skills. It differs from traditional tests in that it focuses on language production rather than selecting the correct answer from a set of options. This type of test has gained increasing attention in the fields of education and assessment due to the opportunity it provides to measure critical thinking, organization, creativity, and the use of language in real-world contexts. In the context of evaluating writing performance, there arose a need for clear objective criteria to help evaluators assess writings fairly and balanced. One of the most prominent models used in this field is Brown's (2007) criterion, which develops to provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating writing performance by relying on a set of elements or dimensions that integrate to form the final assessment of writing performance. The researcher has used the Brown Standard (2007) includes five main criteria for evaluating writing performance, which are; content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and Mechanics.

3.3 Test Validity

Validity is one of the most important standard characteristics of the instruments because it indicates the scale and test's ability to measure the characteristic it was designed to measure (Tyler, 1971) and thus verifies the extent to which the instrument is capable of achieving the purpose for which it was designed. Therefore, two indicators of validity were extracted for the instruments, which are face validity and construct validity.

3.3.1 Face Validity

According to Able (1972), indicate that the best way to use face validity is for a number of experts and specialists to estimate the extent to which the test items and situations represent the trait to be measure. The researcher achieved this type of validity by presenting the test situation, instructions, alternatives, correction method, and its suitability for the research sample. To make sure that the instruments have face validity; they have been reviewed by jury members in the fields of ELT. Their recommendations have been taken into consideration.

3.3.2 Construct Validity

Is the degree to which a measure assesses a specific constructive or trait, and it is achieve by finding the correlation coefficient between the score of each item and the total score of the instruments, which serves as an indicator of the instruments' validity (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997). The researcher has been verified the constructive validity by conducting item analysis using the methods of discriminative power and the correlation of item scores with the total scale score (internal consistency).

3.4 Statistical Analysis of Creativity Scale

3.4.1 The Discriminatory Power of Creativity Scale Items

Table (3.1)

(T) Value for the Creativity Scale Items

Items	(T)Value	Items	(T)Value	Items	(T)Value
1	2,113	11	4,799	21	3,835
2	4,100	12	3,701	22	5,610
3	3,322	13	2,651	23	4,900
4	2,409	14	5,334	24	2,117
5	5,298	15	3,470	25	4,181
6	2,456	16	3,121	26	6,860
7	2,896	17	6,207	27	3,542
8	6,429	18	4,923	28	2,971
9	4,652	19	2,882	29	4,552
10	2,783	20	2,360	30	3,367

3.4.2 The Relationship between the Item Score and the Total Scale Score

Table (3.2), It shows correlation of each item with total score

Items	Person's Correlation Coefficient Value	Items	Person's Correlation Coefficient Value	Items	Person's Correlation Coefficient Value
1	43,0	11	0,56	21	0,34
2	39,0	12	0,27	22	0,47
3	0,61	13	0,41	23	0,31
4	0,33	14	0,36	24	0,55
5	0,52	15	0,24	25	0,40
6	0,35	16	0,68	26	0,61
7	0,39	17	0,42	27	0,33
8	0,57	18	0,39	28	0,39
9	0,46	19	0,30	29	0,56
10	0,31	20	0,51	30	0,48

3.5 Test Reliability

Reliability refers to the degree of stability of the instrument and consistency between its parts, and the goal of calculating reliability is to estimate the errors of the instruments and suggest ways to reduce these errors (Murphy, 1988), since reliability is the consistency in the total scores of the items on the scale and test, which is supposed to measure what should be measured (Harrison, 1983). The reliability of the instruments can be verified in several ways, including methods that measure the internal consistency, such as test-retest method, which is called the stability coefficient over time, and Split-half Method.

To calculate the reliability of the creativity scale has applied to a randomly selects sample from a sample outside the statistical analysis, consisting of (50) students, both male and female, who were chosen randomly. The duration between the two applications was 14 days, which is an appropriate period for retesting (Ferguson, 1991) (see table3.3).

Table3.3
Reliability Coefficients

Instruments	Reliability Coefficients
creativity scales	0.76

Concerning with writing performance, the researcher used split-half method which focuses on calculating the internal consistency between the two halves of the test. The test is divided into two parts in a suitable manner to represent two equivalent forms, and the correlation between them is calculated. The reliability coefficient for the two tests was (0.78), and after applying the Spearman-Brown correction, it has been reached (0.87) at a significance level of 0.01.

4. Results

4.1 Results Related to the First Aim

To achieve the first aim of the study (Identify the level of creativity among university students who study English as a foreign language), the creativity scale has applied to the main research sample. The analysis of the creativity scale showed a mean score of 105.72 with (SD = 13.528), significantly higher than the hypothetical mean of 90. A t-test yielded a calculated t-value of 34.989, exceeding the critical t-value of 1.96 at the 0.05 significance level, indicating a significant increase in creativity among the research sample (see Table 4.1).

Table (4.1)

The Arithmetic Mean, the Hypothetical Mean, the Standard Deviation, and the Calculated and Critical T-Values for the Sample.

Sample type	N.	arithmetic mean	S. D	hypothetical mean	T-Value Calculated	T-Value Critical	significance Level
Student's	250	05,72	13,528	90	34,989	1,96	0,05

4.2 Results Related to the Second Aim

To achieve the second aim of the study (Finding out the relationship between Iraqi EFL students' creativity and their writing performance) the analysis of correlations among creativity, and writing performance in a sample of 250 students showed a statistically significant positive correlation. The calculated t-value exceeded the tabulated t-value of 2.58 at the 0.01 significance level (See Table 4.2).

Table 4.4

The Correlation Coefficient Value between the Research Variables

Variables	N	D.F	correlation coefficient	Pearson correlation coefficient	T-Value Tabulated	Significance statistical
Creativity *Writing performance	250	248	0.612	18.33	2,58	0,01

5. Conclusions

The following are the main conclusions made from the collected results:

1. The students exhibit strong creativity and writing proficiency, reflecting cognitive and linguistic maturity for organized expression.
2. A statistically significant positive relationship exists among creativity and writing performance, indicating that higher correlation with increased creativity and improved writing skills.

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