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**An Investigation into the Proficiency in Academic Written Language among  
University Students: The Case of Third Year License at the University of Echahid  
Larbi Tébessi -Tébessa-**

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## Abstract

Academic writing goes beyond being a mere skill; it functions as a means of engaging intellectually and fostering critical thinking. As a result, having expertise in academic writing is crucial for university students. This expertise not only facilitates the effective expression of ideas but also cultivates the ability to write academically, synthesize, and evaluate information. The main objective of this study is to reveal the academic writing proficiency and its extent among university students, specifically third year license English learners. The study adopted both the quantitative and qualitative research method. Quantitative explanation focuses on numerical data and measurable variables, while a qualitative explanation emphasizes descriptive, non-numerical insights and subjective analysis. Hence, a content analysis has been conducted to answer the research questions which are: 1) Do third year license English students possess the skills necessary to be proficient in their academic writings? And 2) To what extent do third year English learners write academically in their exam papers? The analysis of the students' exam papers yielded several findings; first, a mixed level of proficiency among university students in academic writing, with strengths observed in areas such as objectivity, maintaining formal tone, and coherence, but weaknesses noted in clarity of ideas, adherence to grammar rules, formal language conventions, and spelling accuracy. Second, despite the mixed proficiency level, students' exam essays demonstrate a degree of proficiency in academic writing, encompassing key features such as objectivity, accuracy, coherence, and cohesion. Third, students exhibit varying levels of proficiency across different aspects of academic writing, including formality, accuracy, objectivity, coherence, and clarity, however, there are noticeable gaps in adhering to formal language conventions, grammatical precision, and spelling accuracy. Finally, these findings can be used as raw model for future research.

**Keywords:** Academic writing, proficiency, academic success

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## Dedication

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To my parents, my everything, I am profoundly thankful for the values you instilled in me, shaping me into the person I am today.

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and I am grateful for the unconditional love you showered upon me.

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*Thank you from the bottom of my heart*

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## **Dedication**

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## List of Acronyms

**APA:** American Psychological Association

**BA:** Bachelor of Arts

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**IMs:** Interactional Models

**MLA:** Modern Language Association

**PBMs:** Process Based Models

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## General Introduction

### 1. Background of the study

Academic writing proficiency is a foundational skill essential for success in higher education, influencing students' ability to effectively communicate complex ideas within a scholarly context (Smith, 2018). The importance of academic writing goes beyond the classroom, as it plays a critical role in shaping the intellectual growth and contributions of university students to their respective fields of study (Jones et al., 2020).

In the context of higher education, academic writing is characterized by its formality, precision, and adherence to specific conventions (Miller, 2017). It requires more than the mere expression of ideas; proficiency in academic writing demands clarity, coherence, and a commitment to evidence-based discourse. While linguistic competence is a foundational aspect, mastery of academic writing also encompasses the ability to synthesize information, construct coherent arguments, and engage in critical analysis (Thomas & Harris, 2021).

As emphasized by Clark and Robinson (2018), the quality of written expression serves as more than just an indicator of students' understanding; it also reflects their analytical abilities and capacity to contribute meaningfully to academic discussions.

This study aims to address this gap by exploring the current level of academic writing proficiency among third year English students at Echahid Larbi Tébessi University at the English department. Specifically, it seeks to investigate the prevalence of academic writing in students' written works. By examining the extent to which students demonstrate academic writing skills, the research intends to provide insights into the overall state of academic writing proficiency within the university's student writing.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Proficiency in academic writing is a crucial competency for English as a Foreign Language university students, as it significantly influences their capacity to articulate their knowledge and comprehension within a scholarly framework. In this context, academic writing serves as the conduit through which they express their grasp of concepts, participate in scholarly discussions, and make meaningful contributions to their academic disciplines. However, there is a noticeable variation in the proficiency of academic written language among learners. This variation can be observed in aspects such as vocabulary usage, sentence structure, argument construction, and the ability to adhere to specific academic writing conventions, where it is evident across university students. The extent to which these students can write academically can change their academic performance, their engagement with the academic community, and their future career prospects. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the Algerian context specifically among EFL English learners because it is crucial for them to write academically in their higher education studies. For this reason, this study attempts to investigate third year Bachelor of Arts English students' academic writing performance and proficiency.

## **3. Research Questions**

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- A. Do third year license English students possess the skills necessary to be proficient in their academic writings?
- B. To what extent do third year English learners write academically in their exam papers?

#### **4. Research Assumption**

In the light of the above questions, it is hypothesized that:

- There is a diversity of the academic writing aspects used in exam essays and the academic writing proficiency of 3rd year license English students.

#### **5. Aims of the Study**

The core aim of the current study is to investigate the academic written language among third year license university students, and with an analytical eye, this study will also seek to bring out the extent by which academic language is present in their writings based on the findings.

#### **6. Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute valuable insights to the field of academic writing instruction. By investigating the proficiency in academic written language among university students, the study can help educators understand the current state of academic writing skills in higher education. The findings of this study could have broader implications for higher education policy and practice, as they could reform curriculum development, teaching and learning strategies specifically for teachers of written expression module of all levels, and student support services in universities.

## **7. Methodology**

In an attempt to answer the research questions a content analysis has been used in this work:

Based on content analysis, third year students' exam essays have been collected for the analysis, using linguistics tools to analyze aspects of academic written language such as formality, coherence and cohesion of ideas, objectivity, accuracy, and clarity and precision.

## **8. Structure of the Dissertation**

The present dissertation is structured into two chapters preceded by a general introduction.

The first chapter offers a concise overview of the literature pertaining to fundamental concepts in the field, encompassing aspects such as the definition of academic writing, factors influencing writing proficiency, style and its relationship to academic writing, distinctions between academic and non-academic language, and key characteristics.

In the second chapter, the dissertation transitions to the practical segment, initiating a case study involving third-year students at the University of Larbi Tebessi in Tebessa. This is followed by a comprehensive presentation of the entire process and methodologies employed in the current study.

The dissertation concludes with a general summary, encapsulating the findings and outlining the research's limitations pedagogical implications, and further suggestions and recommendations.

## **Chapter One: The Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides a critical examination of academic writing proficiency and reveals the key elements essential to its understanding. This chapter is divided into two main parts. Part one begins with an overview, providing a comprehensive overview of academic writing skills. Then define the complexity of the skill and create a framework for subsequent exploration. Importantly, this chapter highlights the definition and importance of academic writing skills for university students in their academic fields. The remainder of this course will discuss factors that influence academic written language skills in addition to the writing process and its characteristics. By identifying these key factors, this chapter lays the foundation for a nuanced examination of the challenges and opportunities in the area of academic writing skills. The second section of this chapter discusses the concept of style and its relationship to academic writing. Key features of academic writing are also highlighted.

### **1.1 Section One: The Scope of Academic Written Language Proficiency**

#### ***1.1.1 Overview of Academic Written Language Proficiency***

Proficiency in academic written language is an important aspect of academic communication and success in higher education. To acquire the ability to write academically, one must not only master the grammatical and syntactic aspects of language, but also understand the specific rhetorical strategies and structures of different disciplines. This is exactly what scholars such as Swales and Feak (2004) emphasized: They pointed out that academic writing is not a general skill, but a genre-based activity, with different disciplines



having their own discourse communities with different linguistic conventions and expectations.

Moreover, the proficiency of academic written language goes beyond superficial correctness to include the ability to critically engage with existing literature and integrate relevant sources into students' own writing. Furthermore, academic writing skills are closely related to analytical thinking and the ability to construct logical and coherent arguments. In academic settings, writing is often the primary assessment method (Swales & Feak, 2004). College students are expected to demonstrate not only professional knowledge but also the ability to synthesize information, critically evaluate evidence, and draw sound conclusions. This is consistent with broader educational goals in which the development of effective communication skills is an important component in promoting intellectual growth and preparing individuals for professional and academic success.

In a nutshell, academic written language proficiency is a multifaceted skill that includes linguistic accuracy, genre awareness, citation skills, and critical thinking. It is a critical factor in success in higher education and beyond, allowing individuals to become effective communicators and contributors to the scholarly community (Swales & Feak, 2004). As educators continue to emphasize the importance of written communication skills, students must actively engage with the nuances of academic writing in order to navigate the complex terrain of academic discourse.

### ***1.1.2 Academic Writing Definition and Importance***

Scholars of this field like Jordan and Bean have thoroughly discussed and studied how well university students write academically. They highlight that academic writing is detailed and has many aspects. The complexity of academic writing comes from its role as a way to express complex ideas clearly within an academic or scholarly context.

Jordan (1999) offered a definition of academic writing that has been widely accepted in scholarly circles. He described it as the ability to skillfully articulate complex ideas within a scholarly context. This definition emphasizes the importance of clarity, precision, and depth of understanding in academic writing. Building on Jordan's definition, Bean (2021) further enriched the discourse on academic writing. He underscored the pivotal role that academic writing plays in cultivating critical thinking skills and fostering intellectual growth among students. According to Bean, the practice of academic writing encourages learners to engage with complex ideas, analyze them critically, and articulate their own perspectives, thereby promoting intellectual development.

These perspectives offered by Jordan and Bean are instrumental in understanding the significance of academic writing proficiency in the context of higher education. They highlight that academic writing is not merely a skill, but a tool for intellectual engagement and critical thinking. As such, proficiency in academic writing is of paramount importance for university students, as it equips them with the tools necessary for academic success and intellectual growth.

### ***1.1.3 Factors Influencing Academic Written Language Proficiency***

#### **1.1.3.1 Linguistic Factors**

Linguistic factors significantly shape the language utilized in academic writing, encompassing elements such as vocabulary selection, sentence structure, clarity, and coherence. A formal tone is typically required, alongside the use of specialized terminology pertinent to the respective field of study (Swales, 2004).

Scholars such as Hyland (2001) and Swales (2004) have conducted extensive research on these linguistic features, highlighting their profound impact on academic discourse. They

underscore the paramount importance of precision, clarity, and adherence to disciplinary conventions in scholarly communication. Furthermore, Flowerdew (2013) has delved into the significance of coherence and cohesion in academic texts, elucidating how linguistic devices like transition words and rhetorical patterns contribute to the overall efficacy of academic writing.

### **1.1.3.2 Cognitive Factors**

Cognitive factors play a crucial role in shaping the language utilized in academic writing, encompassing critical thinking, argumentation, organization, and metacognition. These cognitive processes significantly impact the development and expression of ideas within scholarly discourse.

Scholars like Flower (1981) and Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) have extensively examined the influence of these cognitive factors on academic writing. Critical thinking is a vital aspect of academic writing, necessitating writers to critically analyze information, evaluate evidence, and construct well-reasoned arguments. Flower (1981) underscores the significance of engaging in critical analysis to produce perceptive and rigorous academic texts. Argumentation is another cognitive factor that is central to academic writing, involving the construction of coherent arguments supported by evidence and logical reasoning.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) emphasize the role of argumentation in academic discourse, highlighting the writers' need to effectively present and defend their ideas within scholarly contexts. Organization is essential for effectively conveying ideas in academic writing. Writers must structure their writing in a logical manner, with clear transitions between ideas and overall coherence. Additionally, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) discuss the importance of organizing writing to facilitate understanding and coherence for readers. Metacognition, or awareness of one's writing process, is also crucial in academic writing.

Zimmerman (2000) elucidates the role of metacognition in academic writing, emphasizing how writers' awareness of their writing process and strategic planning contribute to the quality of their written work. Writers who are aware of their writing strategies can effectively plan, monitor, and revise their writing to enhance clarity and coherence. Hence, cognitive factors such as critical thinking, argumentation, organization, and metacognition.

### **1.1.3.3 Socio-Cultural Factors**

Various aspects such as cultural values, societal norms, linguistic diversity, power dynamics, and audience expectations have an impact on the language used in academic writing. Cultural values play a role in shaping attitudes towards authority, politeness strategies, and rhetorical patterns in academic writing. For instance, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory demonstrates how values like individualism versus collectivism influence communication styles (Hofstede, 1984).

Societal expectations also influence the language used in academic writing, as certain cultures prioritize collective knowledge production and consensus-building, which in turn affects collaborative writing (Fang, 2012). Furthermore, disciplinary practices contribute to the establishment of writing conventions (Swales, 1990).

The linguistic diversity presents within academic communities and language ideologies also impact the norms of academic writing. Dominant language ideologies tend to favor specific varieties of English, which can have an impact on writers from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Canagarajah, 1999).

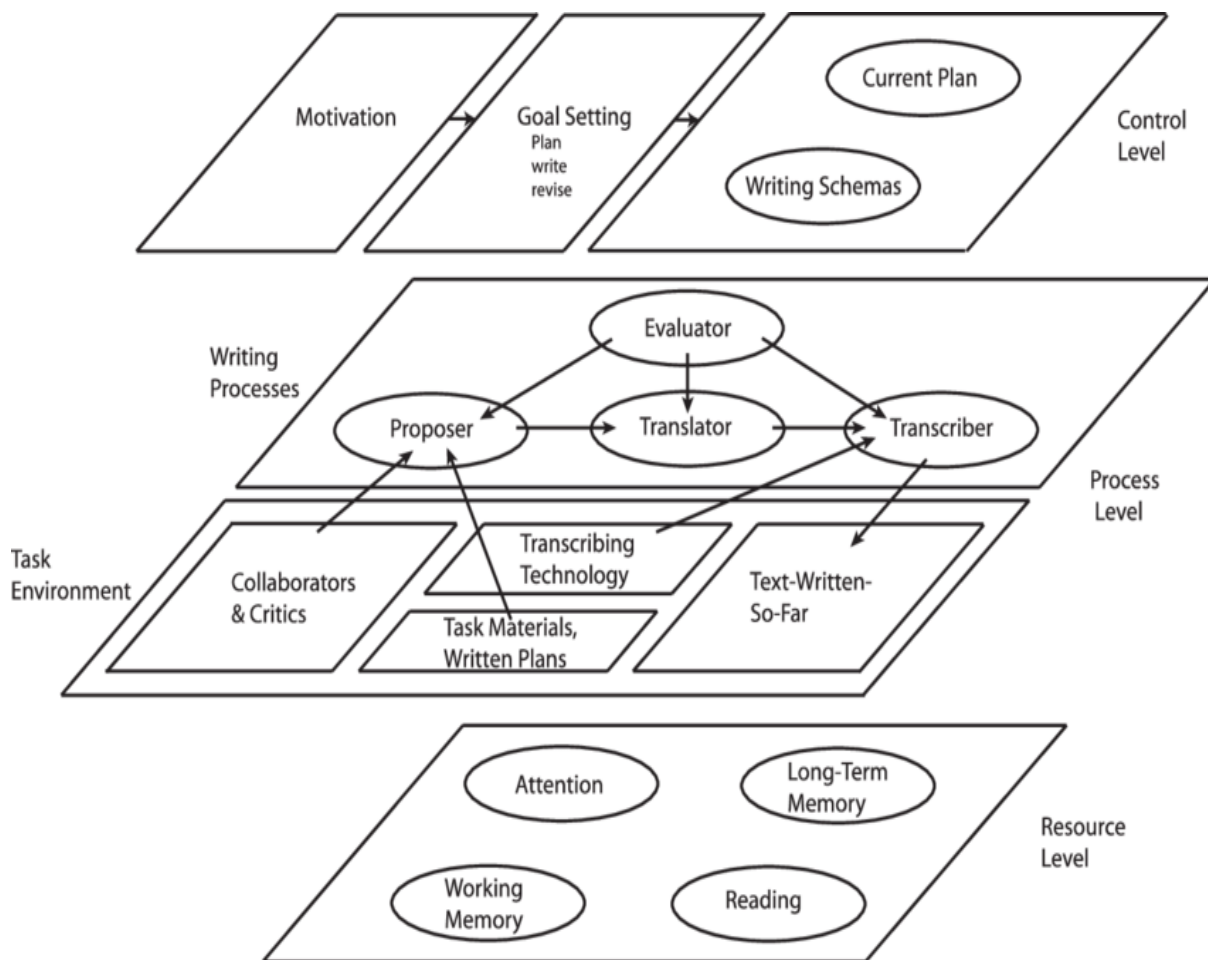
Additionally, power dynamics within academia play a role in shaping the language used in academic writing, as it is utilized to establish authority, negotiate relationships, and navigate hierarchies (Hyland, 2002).

### ***1.1.4 Models of Academic Writing : Understanding the Dimensions of Writing Competence***

#### **1.1.4.1 Process-Based Models**

The Process-Based Models (PBMs) of academic writing proficiency underscore the dynamic and recursive nature of the writing process. These models, based on the influential research of Flower and Hayes (1980), offer a comprehensive insight into how writing evolves over time. The journey outlined by these models consists of specific phases, starting with prewriting tasks for idea generation, followed by drafting, revising, and ultimately, editing the written piece. The process is seen as iterative, enabling writers to go back and improve their work at different points (Flower & Hayes, 1980). Central to these models is the acknowledgment of cognitive processes, especially the planning and problem-solving techniques utilized by writers during the writing process (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987).

This model highlights distinct stages including prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing, allowing writers to iteratively revisit and refine their work (Flower & Hayes, 1980).

**Figure 1***Hayes' writing model*

*Note.* Hayes' (2012) writing model (Hayes, 2012, p. 371)

The writing process is depicted in the figure above as a functional dynamic system that involves a limited number of cognitive activities interacting with various elements in the task environment, such as coauthors, sources, technology, and the emerging text. Internal constraints, including a writer's resources like working memory, genre knowledge, topic knowledge, and linguistic proficiency, shape this process. Hayes (2012) explores the evolution of models of adult writing that he and his colleagues have developed since 1980, highlighting key differences between earlier and later models and explaining the rationale behind these changes.

### **Metacognition and Self-Regulation:**

Metacognition involves the awareness and control that learners have over their cognitive processes (Kellogg, 1994). It is the ability to monitor and regulate one's own thinking during the writing process. In the context of academic writing proficiency, metacognition allows writers and specifically students to understand how they think about and approach writing tasks. It includes being conscious of planning strategies, evaluating the effectiveness of chosen writing methods, and making intentional decisions about the writing process. Writers with strong metacognitive skills can adapt their strategies based on the task requirements, leading to more thoughtful and purposeful composition (Kellogg, 1994).

In the context of university exams as a great example, where time constraints and the need for precision are paramount, metacognition plays a crucial role. University students with well-developed metacognitive skills can navigate exam scenarios with greater efficiency and effectiveness. By being aware of their planning strategies, critically evaluating the suitability of chosen methods, and making intentional decisions about the writing process, students can optimize their approach to written tasks during exams (Kellogg, 1994).

- **Reflective Awareness:**

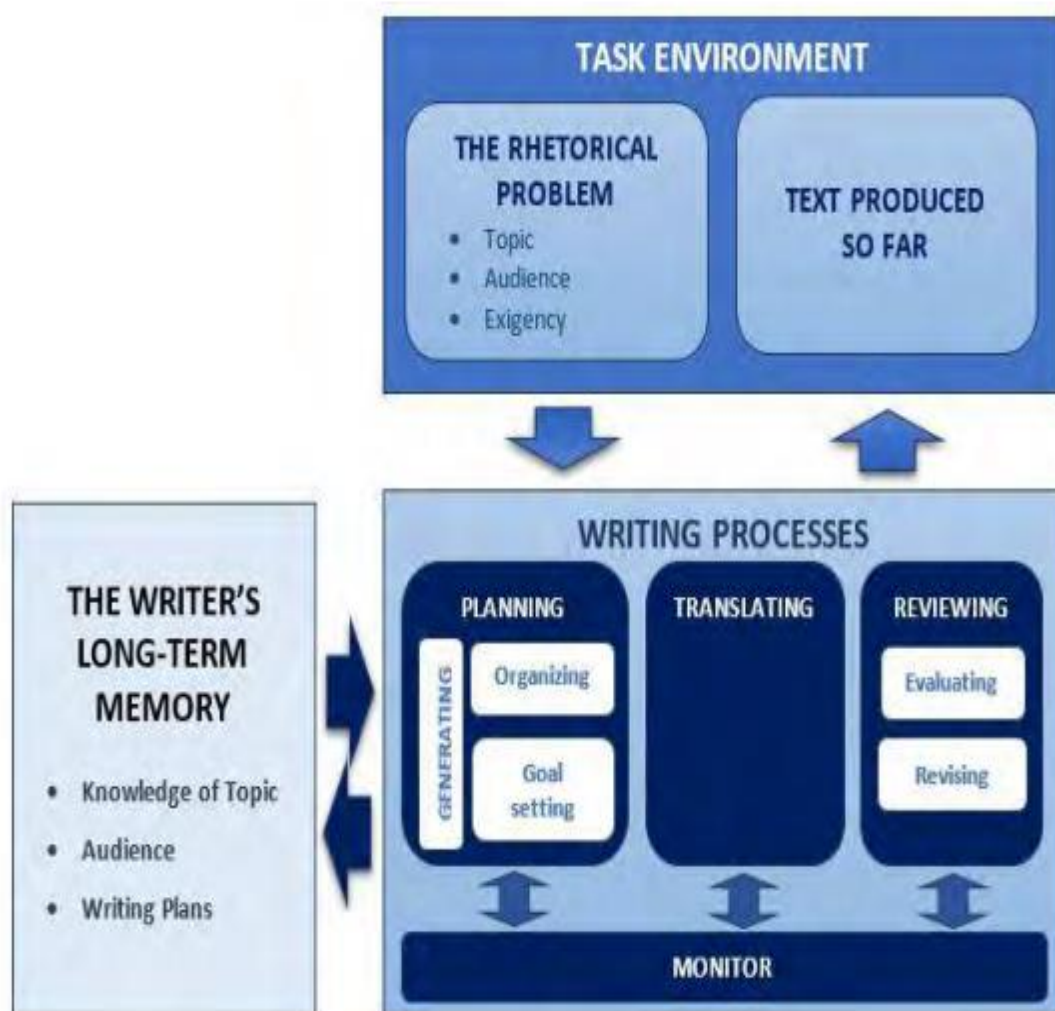
Reflective awareness, as conceptualized within Process-Based Models (PBMs), involves an ongoing and critical dialogue with one's own writing, assessing choices made and contemplating alternative approaches (Flower & Hayes, 1981). In the context of university students' written works, this reflective awareness holds particular significance, shaping the development of writing proficiency, where time constraints and precision are paramount, reflective awareness becomes a valuable asset. Students who actively engage in self-evaluation during writing demonstrate an ability to critically analyze their writing choices within the limited time available. This involves assessing the clarity and coherence of their

arguments, evaluating the appropriateness of language and style, and considering alternative approaches that could enhance the overall quality of their written response.

Through this ongoing dialogue with their own writing, university students gain valuable insights into their strengths as writers and areas for improvement. This reflective stance contributes to a deeper understanding of the writing process, fostering the development of writing proficiency over time (Flower & Hayes, 1981). The ability to reflect on one's writing choices becomes a skill that extends beyond individuals, influencing the long-term growth of a student's writing capabilities throughout their academic journey.

In practical terms, reflective awareness in university exams for instance may involve a brief but intentional self-assessment after completing a written response. Students may consider questions such as: Did I effectively address the exam prompt? Are my arguments clear and well-supported? Is my language precise and appropriate for the academic context? By actively engaging in this reflective dialogue, students not only refine their responses within the constraints of the exam but also contribute to their overall writing proficiency development (Flower & Hayes, 1981).



**Figure 2***Flower and Hayes' Cognitive Process Model*

*Note.* Flower and Hayes' Cognitive Process Model (Flower and Hayes, 1981, p. 370)

Flower and Hayes' Cognitive Process Model, captures the recursive nature of writing and is as complex as the writing process itself. This model specifically focuses on three crucial subprocesses in composing: planning, translating, and reviewing. These subprocesses are interdependent, recursive, and can occur at any point during the writing process. Planning involves generating ideas and organizing thoughts, translating entails transforming these ideas into written text, and reviewing encompasses reading and revising the written text to ensure clarity, coherence, and correctness. The model highlights that these processes do not

follow a linear path but rather constantly interact with each other within a dynamic system. This model has significantly influenced our understanding and pedagogy of writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981).

#### **1.1.4.2 Product-Based Models**

Product- Based Model direct attention towards the outcome of the writing process, often limiting the extent to which students can engage in the process itself due to time constraints. This approach offers a practical framework for evaluating the quality of written responses. Assessment focuses on tangible elements of written work, such as clarity of expression, grammatical accuracy, adherence to academic conventions, and overall effectiveness in conveying ideas (Silva, 1993).

The emphasis on evaluating university students' written performance aligns with the need for efficient and targeted assessment. In time-sensitive situations, evaluators can concentrate on assessing immediate results (written responses) using criteria that align with the evaluation's objectives. Silva's (1993) perspective highlights the significance of considering written work as a valuable artifact for both assessment and analysis, providing insights into a student's ability to effectively communicate within the limitations of their writing.

This model acknowledges that in certain contexts, such as assignments or exams, the final written product can serve as a practical and measurable representation of a student's writing proficiency. However, it is important to acknowledge that while product-oriented models offer valuable insights into the observable aspects of writing, they may not capture the intricate and dynamic elements of the writing process. Therefore, a comprehensive assessment of academic writing proficiency may involve considering both product-oriented and process-oriented perspectives in different academic assessment contexts (Silva, 1993).

#### **1.1.4.2.1 Key Components of Product-Based Models**

##### ***- Surface-Level Features:***

The product-based model proposed by Silva (1993) addresses the surface characteristics of written works, including aspects such as format, visual presentation, and stylistic elements. We look at how well the author adheres to conventions that contribute to the visual appeal and readability of the document.

##### ***- Linguistic Accuracy:***

A fundamental aspect of Product-Based Models is the evaluation of linguistic accuracy. This involves evaluating the student's proficiency in grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. Silva (1993) highlights that assessments focus on the correctness and precision of language usage within the written product.

##### ***- Overall Quality of the Written Work:***

Product-Based Models consider the holistic quality of the final written work. This includes an evaluation of how well the learner synthesizes ideas, communicates a coherent message, and presents a logical and well-structured argument. The overall quality is assessed with regard to clarity, coherence, and effectiveness in achieving the communicative purpose (Silva,1993).

##### ***- Shift from Process to Outcome:***

The essence of Product-Based Models lies in the paradigm shift from the intricacies of the writing process to the tangible result and the written document (Silva,1993). Instead of emphasizing the cognitive and procedural aspects of writing, these models recognize the significance of the final product as the ultimate manifestation of a student's proficiency.

***- Purpose of Assessment and Analysis:***

In Product-Based Models, the purpose of assessment and analysis is centered around the written document itself. The goal is to evaluate how well the students translate their thoughts into a polished and effective piece of writing. Silva (1993) states that the assessment is not only quantitative but also qualitative, focusing on the communicative effectiveness and the fulfillment of the intended purpose.

In summary, Product-Based Models highlight the significance of the final written product in assessing writing proficiency. By emphasizing surface-level features, linguistic accuracy, and overall quality, these models provide a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of a student's communication in a tangible and practical context.

**1.1.4.3 Interactional Models**

Swales (1990) presents Interactional Models (IMs) as a framework for academic writing proficiency. These models highlight the social and collaborative aspects of the writing process, which are especially relevant for university students.

According to Swales (1990), writing is not simply an individual task but a social activity that involves engaging with the audience, receiving feedback, and considering the broader context of discourse communities. This understanding is crucial for university students, as it reminds them that writing is not done in isolation but within a network of interactions with both the writer and the wider community of readers. Furthermore, the collaborative nature of writing, emphasized by Interactional Models, is particularly valuable in exam settings.

University students are encouraged to actively engage with others, seek feedback, and participate in ongoing dialogues within their discourse community (Swales, 1990). This

collaborative dimension not only enhances the writing process but also contributes to language development and the improvement of writing skills, even under the constraints of exam conditions.

In conclusion, Interactional Models provide a comprehensive perspective on academic writing proficiency by recognizing the interplay between individual writing skills and the social, collaborative elements that shape the act of communication. Embracing this perspective is highly beneficial for university students as it helps them navigate the complexities of audience engagement, incorporate constructive feedback, and effectively communicate within diverse discourse communities (Swales, 1990).

#### ***1.1.5 The Writing Process in Academic Writing***

The process of academic writing for EFL university students involves a systematic and iterative series of steps to compose, revise, and refine scholarly documents. This process includes stages like prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading, each contributing to the creation of a well-structured academic piece.

EFL students utilize critical thinking, research skills, and organizational strategies to produce effective and credible content. Multiple revisions ensure clarity, coherence, and academic integrity in the final work, as highlighted by Brown & Johnson. The iterative nature of this process is particularly beneficial for EFL students, especially during exams, allowing for continuous improvement.

Academic writing, known for its focus on clarity, evidence-based argumentation, and adherence to academic standards, requires a thoughtful and disciplined approach. Clark & Robinson emphasize the importance of maintaining this perspective throughout the writing process. For EFL university students, this disciplined approach is crucial in overcoming

language barriers and presenting well-structured, coherent, and academically sound written responses.

#### **1.1.5.1 Pre-writing Stage: Understanding the Foundations**

The process of creating written works typically commences with preliminary tasks, commonly referred to as prewriting. These tasks, such as brainstorming, researching, and outlining, are intended to spark ideas and establish a clear path for the upcoming writing assignment (Flower & Hayes, 1980). This fundamental stage acts as the foundation, helping students grasp the purpose and target audience of the academic text. Throughout the prewriting phase, EFL students navigate the rhetorical situation, consider their objectives, and define the goals of their writing. This procedure involves aligning ideas with the recognized norms of academic communication, as highlighted by Hyland (2004).

The importance of this preparatory stage is particularly vital for EFL college students, laying the groundwork for success in examinations and other academic evaluations. Through engaging in planning and goal setting, guided by Flower and Hayes' (1980) cognitive process theory, EFL students establish a framework for overcoming language barriers and presenting well-structured and purposeful written compositions.

#### **1.1.5.2 Drafting Stage: Transforming Ideas into Written Form**

After completing the initial prewriting stage, EFL university students move on to the creation phase, which is a crucial step in transforming their ideas into a coherent written form. During this phase, students focus on organizing their arguments, incorporating supporting evidence, and establishing a logical flow of ideas in their written work, whether it be essays or exam responses (Flower & Hayes, 1980).

The main objective is to express thoughts without excessive concern for perfection, aligning with Flower and Hayes' (1980) notion of "translating intentions into written language." This highlights the cognitive effort required to convert mental constructs into a tangible written product. The creation phase holds significant importance as it serves as a vital link between conceptualization and tangible expression. It requires students to navigate genre conventions and make effective linguistic choices in order to effectively communicate their ideas within the constraints of exam conditions. For EFL students, this phase becomes a strategic endeavor as they strive to accurately and coherently convey their thoughts in a non-native language during high-stakes exams (Flower & Hayes, 1980).

#### **1.1.5.3 Revision Stage: Crafting Coherent and Effective Arguments**

The refinement phase plays a crucial role in improving one's proficiency in academic writing. During this stage, students carefully evaluate and enhance their initial draft by critically analyzing the clarity of their arguments, the coherence of their ideas, and the overall effectiveness of their communication. This process aligns with the principles outlined by Hayes and Flower (1980). In the process of revising, EFL students adopt the concept of "global revising" proposed by Flower and Hayes (1980).

This involves a comprehensive refinement of the overall structure of their written responses, ensuring that ideas are logically organized and presented coherently. Additionally, students also engage in "local revising" to improve the clarity and coherence of individual sentences, addressing subtle nuances that contribute to a polished and impactful written outcome. Particularly in exam contexts, where concise and precise expression is essential, the enhancement phase becomes a strategic endeavor for EFL students. It aims to craft articulate and effective written arguments within the constraints of time and language proficiency (Flower & Hayes, 1980).

#### **1.1.5.4 Editing Stage: Refining Language Mechanics and Conventions**

The revision phase plays a vital role in perfecting language mechanics, grammar, and writing styles. Students diligently examine their work, aiming to identify and correct errors while ensuring strict adherence to academic conventions, as outlined by Hayes and Flower (1980). This meticulous attention to detail becomes crucial for producing a polished and academically sound piece of writing. During exams, the editing stage becomes even more significant as it involves real-time refinement of language, grammar, and style. Students prioritize precision to accurately convey ideas within the constraints of time and word limits.

This process reflects the microlevel considerations emphasized by Flower and Hayes (1980), highlighting the importance of paying attention to detail for linguistic accuracy. The concept of editing seamlessly aligns with the broader objective of fostering language competence in academic writing, as emphasized by Biber et al. (2002). This phase becomes a strategic endeavor for students to present their ideas with clarity and adherence to academic language standards.

#### **1.1.5.5 Final Draft: Incorporate feedback from the revision and editing stages**

In the final stages of the writing process, the focus shifts to the completion of the final draft. It is crucial to strictly follow the exam guidelines at this point (Flower & Hayes, 1980). It is important to incorporate feedback received during the revision and editing stages for assignments and exam-related writing with great care. EFL students concentrate on addressing comments and suggestions regarding the clarity, coherence, and overall structure of their written work during this last revision. They pay special attention to ensuring that their arguments are well-supported and in line with the thesis statement, meeting the exam prompt's specific criteria. Additionally, the final draft is checked to ensure it adheres to the



exam guidelines on formatting, length restrictions, and content requirements, as highlighted by Flower & Hayes (1980).

This meticulous attention to detail during the final phase is crucial for EFL university students as they aim to present well-crafted and guideline-compliant responses in the demanding context of exams, while navigating language difficulties and exam-specific demands.

#### **1.1.5.6 Citation and Referencing:**

In line with the assignment instructions, it is crucial to properly cite all sources used in the paper, following the specified citation style (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.). A carefully constructed bibliography or works cited page is vital and should be created with accuracy to reflect the precise sources referenced in the paper. Whether including direct quotes, paraphrasing information, or presenting ideas from external sources, each instance must be accurately cited throughout the paper to uphold scholarly integrity (American Psychological Association, 2020; Modern Language Association, 2016).

#### **1.1.5.7 Proofreading:**

During the proofreading stage, a comprehensive review is conducted to ensure precision and clarity. This final check is essential for students to identify and correct any remaining errors or typographical issues (Strunk Jr. & White, 2009). Special attention is given to guaranteeing the accuracy and correct formatting of a student's written work, with a meticulous review of the paper's structure. Moreover, in this crucial phase, careful consideration is given to spelling, grammar, and typographical errors. The goal is to enhance the overall quality and coherence of the written responses. Following the guidelines set forth by Strunk Jr. & White (2009), this proofreading-like final review is a necessary step for

university students preparing their written works, as it acts as a safeguard to present polished and error-free responses, enhancing the overall effectiveness and professionalism of their work submissions (Strunk Jr. & White, 2009).

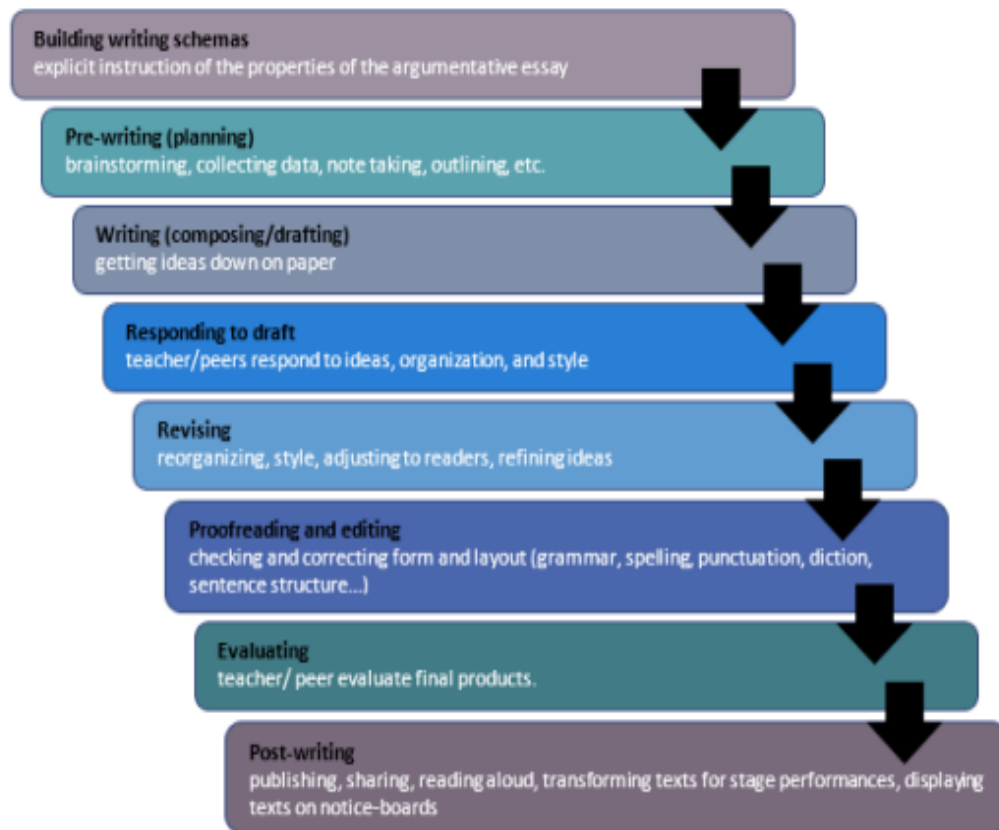
#### **1.1.5.8 Submission:**

English as a Foreign Language university students must ensure the prompt and accurate submission of their refined exam responses. It is crucial for students to adhere to the specified deadline and meticulously review all submission requirements, including the preferred file format and designated submission platform. This is especially important if exams are not taking place in classrooms. The primary focus should be on strictly following the provided submission instructions to ensure that the exam responses are received precisely by the intended recipients or assessment platforms. This adherence aligns with the guidance of the Council of Science Editors (2014). Thoroughly verifying the submission details becomes a critical process to prevent complications or errors in the submission procedure, guaranteeing that EFL students' hard work and dedication in crafting polished exam responses are accurately received and assessed (Council of Science Editors, 2014).

The writing process is shown and simplified in the figure below:

**Figure 3**

*Hyland's process model of writing instruction*



*Note.* A process model of writing instruction (Hyland, 2003, p. 11)

Hyland's (2003) instructional writing model for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners focuses on the stages and strategies involved in teaching writing. This model stresses the significance of offering clear instructions, scaffolding, and feedback to assist EFL learners during the writing process. It underscores the necessity of providing explicit instruction on different writing aspects like brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Furthermore, Hyland highlights the importance of taking into account students' specific needs and backgrounds, such as linguistic proficiency, cultural background, and prior writing experiences, when developing writing instruction.

## 1.2 Section Two: Style and Academic Writing

### 1.2.1 *Style*

Style refers to the distinct and recognizable manner in which students express their thoughts, ideas, and narratives. It encompasses the transmission of information through a combination of linguistic, structural, and rhetorical choices. These elements collectively influence the overall tone, mood, and uniqueness of a written piece, creating a recognizable voice that sets the writer apart (Crystal, 2004). The linguistic aspect of style involves careful word selection and the use of specific language patterns to convey meaning and evoke emotions. This can be particularly challenging for EFL learners (Crystal, 2004). Additionally, they must navigate the complexities of a non-native language, requiring them to consider language nuances in order to effectively communicate their ideas. Structural choices, such as organizing paragraphs and incorporating transitions, also play a crucial role in ensuring coherence and flow in writing, especially in academic settings (Crystal, 2004).

Rhetorical techniques, such as the use of figurative language and repetition, can enhance the expressive and persuasive qualities of a text, enabling EFL learners to convey their ideas with impact (Crystal, 2004). In the realm of EFL university students' written works, style becomes a medium through which the writer's personality, perspective, and unique voice emerge, leaving a lasting impression on the reader. Crystal (2004) emphasizes the multifaceted nature of style and its pivotal role in shaping the reader's experience and interpretation of a piece of writing in the context of non-native English expression. Crafting their writings requires EFL learners to delicately fuse crucial aspects such as linguistic elements, structural components, rhetorical techniques, individuality, and tone.

- **Linguistic Elements:**

The writer's selection of words, sentence organization, and language patterns are all part of style. This encompasses the utilization of vocabulary, sentence duration, and syntax to communicate significance and elicit particular emotions (Strunk & White, 2000). For instance, learners might choose to employ succinct and straightforward language to establish a formal and commanding tone, or they might incorporate figurative language and diverse sentence structures to enhance the depth and subtlety of their compositions.

- **Structural Components:**

The organization and arrangement of ideas within a text are also part of its style. This includes choices regarding the length of paragraphs and sentences, as well as the overall flow and coherence of the writing. The structure chosen by university students can impact how readers experience and understand the content. A well-structured piece improves clarity and makes the reading experience smoother (Williams, 1994).

- **Rhetorical Techniques:**

The utilization of rhetorical techniques, like metaphor, simile, irony, and repetition, is an additional element of style. These techniques enhance the student's persuasive and expressive skills, shaping the reader's interaction with the text (Corbett, 1990). For example, a student might utilize metaphors to clarify abstract ideas or use repetition to underscore and strengthen their point.

- **Individuality and Tone:**

Style serves as an expression of the writer's unique voice and personality. Beyond the technical aspects of writing, it encompasses the individual way in which an author presents their perspective, even in the challenging context of exams (Ferguson, 2017). The tone, reflecting the student's attitude towards the subject matter, becomes a vital element of style

and can be formal, informal, objective, subjective, or a combination of these, contributing to the overall character of the writing (Ferguson, 2017).

In conclusion, writing style encompasses linguistic choices, structural elements, rhetorical techniques, and the writer's personal voice, all working together to shape the distinct character of a text. It is a complex concept that adds depth and richness to written expression (Crystal, 2004).

### ***1.2.2 Style in Relation to Academic Writing***

Academic style plays a vital role in connecting the intricate web of scholarly ideas. It encompasses the subtle manner in which these ideas are conveyed, placing significant importance on three fundamental pillars: clarity, formality, and objectivity (Gibaldi, 2016).

The achievement of a lucid and precise articulation of complex concepts stands as a fundamental principle within academic style, highlighting the necessity to communicate ideas with meticulous accuracy, which can be particularly challenging for EFL students (Gibaldi, 2016). An essential aspect of academic style, particularly relevant for EFL students during exams, is the unwavering commitment to maintaining a formal and objective tone throughout the discourse. Students are expected to adhere to professional standards, which require them to avoid colloquial language and personal biases. This conscientious effort not only aligns with the expectations of scholarly rigor but also significantly contributes to enhancing the credibility of their work, a crucial element in the context of academic assessments (Gibaldi, 2016).

The meticulous practices of citation and referencing are integral to the fabric of academic style for EFL students. Proper acknowledgment of sources, especially when required for assignments, and following established citation styles such as APA, MLA, or

Chicago, serve a dual purpose. They not only give due credit to the original authors but also provide readers, including examiners, with a clear path to explore the referenced materials, fostering a scholarly continuum (Gibaldi, 2016). The structural foundation of academic writing, particularly relevant in the context of exams for EFL students, is of utmost importance.

A well-structured academic piece adheres to a predefined structure, which includes an introduction, a thesis statement, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. The logical flow of ideas and seamless transitions between sections enhance the overall stylistic integrity of academic writing, assisting EFL students in presenting their ideas coherently.

### ***1.2.3 Academic Written Language Versus Non-Academic Written Language***

Academic language and non-academic language are two distinct registers used for communication. Academic language is formal and technical, typically utilized in educational or research contexts, where personal opinions are not relevant. It emphasizes precision, logic, and adhering to scholarly writing standards (Thaiss & Zawacki, 2006). On the other hand, non-academic language is informal and commonly employed by individuals in their everyday conversations to convey information in a simple and understandable manner (Crystal, 1997).

#### **1.2.3.1 Academic Written Language**

Academic language, which is crucial for scholarly communication, embodies a unique formality and complexity. It is predominantly observed in academic papers, research articles, and educational materials, and is carefully crafted to meet the rigorous standards of academic writing and discourse (Hyland, 2009). Hyland (2009) highlighted the importance of using discipline-specific vocabulary to cater to the specific needs of different academic fields, creating a shared lexicon that enhances communication among experts. The language

structure tends to be intricate, characterized by complex sentence constructions that contribute to the overall formality and sophistication of the discourse. Additionally, it avoids subjective elements commonly found in everyday communication. This impartial approach is essential for maintaining the credibility and scholarly integrity of the content. The ultimate goal of academic language is to convey information with clarity and depth, reflecting a commitment to the pursuit of knowledge (Hyland, 2009). In academic writing, abstraction plays a key role, allowing for the exploration of complex ideas and theories. Arguments are presented with logical coherence, with each point building upon the preceding one. This logical structure not only aids comprehension but also strengthens the persuasiveness of the argument through the incorporation of evidence and rigorous analysis (Swales & Feak, 2004). Furthermore, there is a special emphasis on the use of specialized terminology relevant to a particular field of study, contributing to the abstract nature of academic language. Moreover, academic language prioritizes cohesion, emphasizing a well-organized structure that guides the reader through a systematically presented argument (Swales & Feak, 2004). This organizational clarity not only enhances the reader's understanding but also reflects the meticulous planning and thought invested in the academic writing process.

In essence, academic language is a sophisticated and carefully structured form of communication designed to meet the specific demands of scholarly discourse. It encapsulates precision, objectivity, complexity, and a commitment to the logical presentation of ideas, ultimately contributing to the advancement of knowledge within academic communities (Swales & Feak, 2004).

### **1.2.3.2 Non- Academic Written Language**

Non-academic language plays a vital role in communication, adapting to various situations and taking on an informal tone in everyday interactions. Unlike the structured and



formal nature of academic language, non-academic language embraces simplicity, directness, and a conversational style, catering to a wide range of contexts such as informal writing, conversations, and social interactions (Crystal, 1997).

One key characteristic of non-academic language is its flexibility in sentence structure. It freely incorporates colloquial expressions, regionalisms, and even slang, allowing for a more relaxed and natural flow of communication. This freedom of expression stands in stark contrast to the strict conventions of academic writing. Additionally, non-academic language embraces a more personal and subjective approach. Expressing emotions and opinions openly is not only accepted but often encouraged. This aspect enables individuals to communicate not only ideas but also their feelings, fostering a more intimate and engaging form of interaction (Crystal, 1997). According to linguist David Crystal (1997), non-academic language reflects the natural evolution of language in everyday life. It is not constrained by the rigid rules of academia but rather thrives on its ability to resonate with people in a relatable, accessible, and socially dynamic manner.

Non-academic language prioritizes accessibility and is predominantly used in everyday interactions where a more relaxed and approachable tone is not only acceptable but often preferred. In these situations, the focus shifts from the formalities of academic communication to the ease with which ideas can be understood. Colloquial expressions, regionalisms, and a conversational tone characterize non-academic language, fostering a connection and relatability among speakers (Crystal, 1997).

Bailey (2018) provides a comprehensive comparison of academic and non-academic language, highlighting key differences in tone, vocabulary, and sentence structure; below infographic on the difference between academic and non-academic writing summarizes the differences comparatively:

**Figure 4***Differences between academic and non-academic writing*

Aspect	Academic Language	Non-Academic Language
Tone	Formal and objective	Informal and subjective
Vocabulary	Technical, discipline-specific, and complex	Simple, general, and colloquial
Sentence Structure	Complex and varied, often with multiple clauses	Simple and straightforward
Evidence	Based on research, statistics, and citations	Based on personal experience and opinions
Purpose	To inform, argue, or persuade with evidence and logic	To entertain, express personal views, or inform casually

*Note.* Comparison of Academic and Non-Academic Language (Bailey, 2018)

### ***1.2.4 Features of Academic Writing***

Academic writing typically evolves around several key features that distinguish it from other forms of writing. These features are as follows:

- **Formality:**

Formality is a cornerstone in academic writing for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university students, influencing both the quality and credibility of their work (Crystal, 1997). The incorporation of formal language and precise vocabulary is not merely a stylistic choice but a necessity for accurately communicating complex ideas within the scholarly domain (Crystal, 1997).

The cultivation of a formal and objective tone is imperative in academic writing (Gibaldi, 2016). It reflects a commitment to professionalism, steering clear of subjective language or personal biases. By maintaining an objective stance, EFL students contribute to the overall scholarly discourse, fostering an environment where ideas are evaluated based on their merit rather than influenced by individual perspectives. The professionalism associated with formality extends beyond language choices, where it encompasses the adherence to citation and referencing standards (Gibaldi, 2016).

- **Precision:**

Precision is paramount in academic writing, employing precise language and carefully chosen vocabulary is essential for accurately conveying ideas within the scholarly domain (Crystal, 1997). This linguistic precision not only enhances clarity but also contributes to the overall effectiveness and professionalism of academic writing (Gibaldi, 2016).

In scholarly contexts, EFL students must select words with precision to articulate their thoughts with accuracy and depth. The use of discipline-specific terminology, tailored to the

subject matter, adds a layer of sophistication to their writing (Crystal, 1997). This precision ensures that the intended meaning is communicated clearly to the reader, aligning with the standards of academic discourse. This commitment to precision not only upholds the integrity of their work but also demonstrates a dedication to the pursuit of knowledge within their academic field (Gibaldi, 2016).

Swales and Feak (2004) also emphasize the significance of clarity and precision in academic writing, asserting that students must develop the essential skills to articulate complex ideas with an explicit way. He argues that proficiency in academic writing involves mastering tasks and skills that are fundamental to effective scholarly communication at the graduate level.

- **Hedging:**

Hedging is a strategic linguistic device frequently employed in the academic writings. It involves the use of cautious language to indicate a degree of tentativeness or uncertainty in the presentation of ideas. Hedging allows EFL students to navigate complex academic discourse, express nuanced perspectives, and engage with scholarly conversations in a sophisticated manner (Hyland, 1996).

In scholarly writing, EFL students often utilize hedging to acknowledge the limitations of their arguments or the potential for alternative interpretations. This linguistic strategy helps them maintain a balance between asserting their ideas and recognizing the complexities inherent in the subject matter. By incorporating hedging phrases, such as "may," "might," or "could," EFL students signal a level of caution and intellectual humility (Hyland, 1996).

Therefore, EFL students must exercise discernment in incorporating hedging elements, ensuring that it enhances the precision and academic tone of their writings without compromising the assertiveness of their main points (Hyland, 1996).

- **Explicitness:**

Explicitness in academic writing is a crucial aspect for (EFL) university students, encompassing the clear and unambiguous expression of ideas and arguments (Hyland, 1996). It involves the use of language that leaves little room for misinterpretation, ensuring that the intended meaning is conveyed precisely to the reader.

In academic contexts, explicitness is achieved through the use of straightforward language, well-defined terminology, and unambiguous statements. EFL students strive to articulate their thoughts with clarity, avoiding vague or ambiguous language that may lead to confusion (Hyland, 1996). Explicit writing enables readers to grasp the author's intentions without the need for extensive interpretation.

Furthermore, explicitness is closely linked to the development of academic competence in EFL students. It reflects their ability to convey complex ideas in a straightforward manner, demonstrating a mastery of the subject matter and an understanding of the conventions of scholarly discourse (Hyland, 1996).

- **Objectivity:**

Maintaining objectivity in academic writing is essential for learners as it helps them express their ideas clearly and fairly, thereby enhancing their credibility as writers. According to Smith (2018), objectivity in academic writing refers to the practice of presenting information and arguments without personal bias or subjective interpretation. This includes using evidence-based reasoning, logical analysis, and precise language to support claims and conclusions (Dawn, 2004).

In addition, EFL learners should strive for clear and precise language and avoid using vague or emotive terms that may introduce bias into their writing. By adhering to formal academic conventions and maintaining a professional tone, they can foster a feeling of trustworthiness and reliability among their readers (Roberts, 2021). Rowena Murray and Sarah Moore.

- **Accuracy:**

Accuracy in writing holds importance for English as a Foreign Language as it guarantees the credibility, reliability, and valuable contribution, to scholarly conversations. As highlighted by Brown and Smith in their 2019 study accuracy refers to the precision and correctness of the information presented in the academic text. This includes adhering to grammar and its rules, and avoiding factual errors or misunderstandings (Johnson, 2017).

- **Complexity:**

The complexity of academic writing is a challenge for EFL learners because it requires them to navigate complex language structures and communicate challenging ideas effectively. Complexity includes depth of analysis, use of advanced vocabulary, and mastery of complex sentence structures. Achieving an appropriate level of complexity in academic writing is critical for English language learners to demonstrate their understanding of complex concepts and participate in academic discussions in their field (Bassham, 2011).

Furthermore, English learners must focus on honing their critical thinking skills to interact with complex ideas and viewpoints. This involves the analysis and synthesis of information from various sources, the evaluation of argument validity, and the formulation of logical conclusions. Incorporating counterarguments and addressing potential objections can enhance the depth and complexity of English language learners' writing (Bassham, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

In summary, this chapter provides a comprehensive examination of academic writing skills, focusing on its essential components and their importance to EFL English students. By examining the factors that influence capabilities, including language, processes, and characteristics, where it lays the ground for understanding the challenges and opportunities in the field. Furthermore, a discussion of style and its relationship to academic writing reveals key characteristics and expectations in this context. Overall, this chapter highlights the importance of developing strong academic writing skills and provides some insights to help students gain this critical aspect of their academic journey.

## Chapter Two: Research Methodology, Analysis and Discussion

### Introduction

The objective of the present research is to conduct an in-depth investigation of the proficiency in academic written language exhibited by third-year License English students. This study seeks to assess their ability to effectively communicate complex ideas, arguments, and analyses in written form that adheres to the standards and conventions of academic discourse. Furthermore, this research aims to quantify the degree to which these students have mastered the skills necessary to produce high-quality academic writing.

Ultimately, the goal is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the students' capabilities in academic writing, which is a crucial skill for success in both their current studies and future professional endeavors.

Based on the research questions, this study is going to be designed by a mixed research approach (qualitative and quantitative). The qualitative one is a methodological approach aimed at exploring and understanding phenomena in their natural settings, often through in-depth analysis of textual or visual data, rather than numerical measurements which is the quantitative one (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These approaches emphasize the subjective experiences, perspectives, and meanings attributed by individuals, thereby providing rich insights into complex social phenomena. Therefore, the mixed research approach is the appropriate tool to investigate learners' academic written texts specifically their exam papers essays.

Along with this research, the data collection instrument used is content analysis of written texts. Thus, to answer the questions of the present study, content analysis has been adopted to analyze learners' academic writing.



Consequently, the data gathered from the content analysis is going to be interpreted through this chapter and going to be discussed in section two. Besides, the limitations, implications, and recommendations are presented in section three of this chapter.

## **Section One: Research Methodology**

### ***2.1.1 Study Design***

The research design used in this study is of a mixed methods nature, where the investigation explores and explains academic written language among third-year students.

The quantitative method helps in calculating frequencies from students' papers which allows for understanding the results, and the reason for a qualitative research design is its capability to delve deeply into the nuances and complexities of human behavior and experiences, providing an opportunity to better understand a studied phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Therefore, the suitable method for the current study is the mixed research method. After that the data is interpreted according to the aim of the existing study.

### ***2.1.2 Sample and Setting:***

This study has been conducted at Echahid Chiekh Larbi Tebessi University - Tebessa- at the English Department in the academic year 2023/2024 for different reasons: as master 2 researchers, it could be easy to obtain access to the university and to develop the study with the participants. Second, due to budgetary constraints, it was more practical to choose the university that are within a suitable traveling distance, therefore less efforts and time since we are restricted with a given time.

The participants that have been included in this research are third year license students since it is their last year as undergraduates. According to the nature and the purpose of this study, the sample that has been adopted for the current study is selected through the

probability random sampling specifically systematic sampling. According to this technique elements are selected at regular intervals from an ordered list or frame, after a random start (Babbie, 2016). The advantages of non-probability systematic random sampling are Ease of Implementation, efficiency, reduced bias, representativeness, and potential cost savings. Thus, probability systematic random sampling was obtained where students are selected at regular intervals from the ordered list of groups of third year.

The systematic sampling follows the following equation:

Each of the  $C_n^N$  possible sample has the same probability,  $1/C_n^N$  of being chosen

- N stands for the population= 192
- n stands for the desired sample= 10 (exam papers of the students)
- $C = N/n = 192/10$ ,  $C=19$

The sampling interval is determined by dividing the total population size by the desired sample size. So, the total number of third-year students is 192, and the desired sample size is 10. Hence, the sampling interval is calculated as 192 divided by 10, which equals 19.2. Since we can't select a fraction of a student, we round this down to the nearest whole number which is 19. From a random start ( $i= 5$ ) each fifth ( $5^{\text{th}}$ ) item contributes as a participant, therefore, 10 exam papers of the students have been collected on this basis from the administration.

### ***2.1.3 Research Instruments***

Research instruments refer to the various tools and methods utilized by researchers to gather data from participants in a study (Burns & Grove, 2019). Since the main aim of the study is to investigate the presence of academic writing in third year learners, this research

has been conducted through analyzing students' exam papers of the module of civilization since it is believed to be the only module that contains essays.

Therefore, content analysis is the appropriate one to achieve this aim and allow to answer the research questions.

### **2.1.3.1 Description of the Content Analysis Rubric**

The steps that have been followed in designing the content analysis criteria are as follows:

- **Coding Categories:** Develop coding categories that capture key aspects of academic writing
- **Coding Process:** Systematically reading through the exam papers, applying the coding categories to relevant sections.
- **Peer Review:** Seeking feedback from peers and experts from the field of academic writing to ensure reliability and validity of the coding scheme.
- **Thematic Analysis (generating themes):** Looking over the codes that have been created and identify patterns among them, then coming up with preliminary themes that reflect the underlying meaning in the data.
- **Reviewing Themes:** Reviewing the potential themes by examining the relationships between codes within each theme.
- **Defining and Naming Themes:** Define each theme clearly. What does it represent? What aspects of the data does it encapsulate? And giving each theme a descriptive name that reflects its content.

Therefore, and based on the main features of academic writing, the themes that we ended up with are formality, objectivity, accuracy, clarity and precision, coherence and cohesion.

#### ***2.1.4 Data Collection Procedures***

In order to collect data using the tools mentioned above, the procedures took place at the university, where ten of third year students' civilization exam papers have been collected from the administration after the acceptance of the head of the English department. The process began with a formal request submitted to the head of the department, detailing the research objectives and the necessity of accessing the exam papers. Upon receiving approval, coordination with the administration was established to facilitate the collection of the exam papers. The exam papers were collected directly from the administration office in a controlled and secure manner and to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the students. This detailed and ethical approach ensured the integrity and reliability of the data collection process, providing a solid foundation for the study's findings and conclusions.

#### ***2.1.5 Analysis Procedures***

After collecting the data from the above sample, the data has been analyzed through designing a content analysis rubric that serves the academic writing conventions (formality, objectivity, accuracy, clarity and precision, coherence, and cohesion). Then, based on these criteria the analysis took place, where each exam paper has been analyzed quantitatively through calculating the frequencies of each criterion in each theme, and explaining each one under the provided table.

To determine the validity and reliability of the instrument used. The rubric was well revised according to the main features proposed by scholars in order to guarantee its

usefulness, therefore, it is mainly clear and serves the academic conventions. The papers were analyzed separately by both of the researchers at home. Each researcher worked independently, without influencing or communicating with the other during the analysis phase, to maintain the integrity of the individual evaluations. Initially, each researcher familiarized themselves with the content of the exam papers, reading through each document multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the students' responses. The focus was on identifying key themes, patterns, and indicators of academic writing proficiency, such as formality, coherence of ideas, objectivity, and adherence to formal academic conventions. Following the individual coding, each researcher compiled their findings into detailed reports, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses observed in the students' writing. These reports included specific examples from the exam papers to illustrate key points and provide evidence for the researchers' conclusions.

## **Section Two: Data Analysis and Discussion**

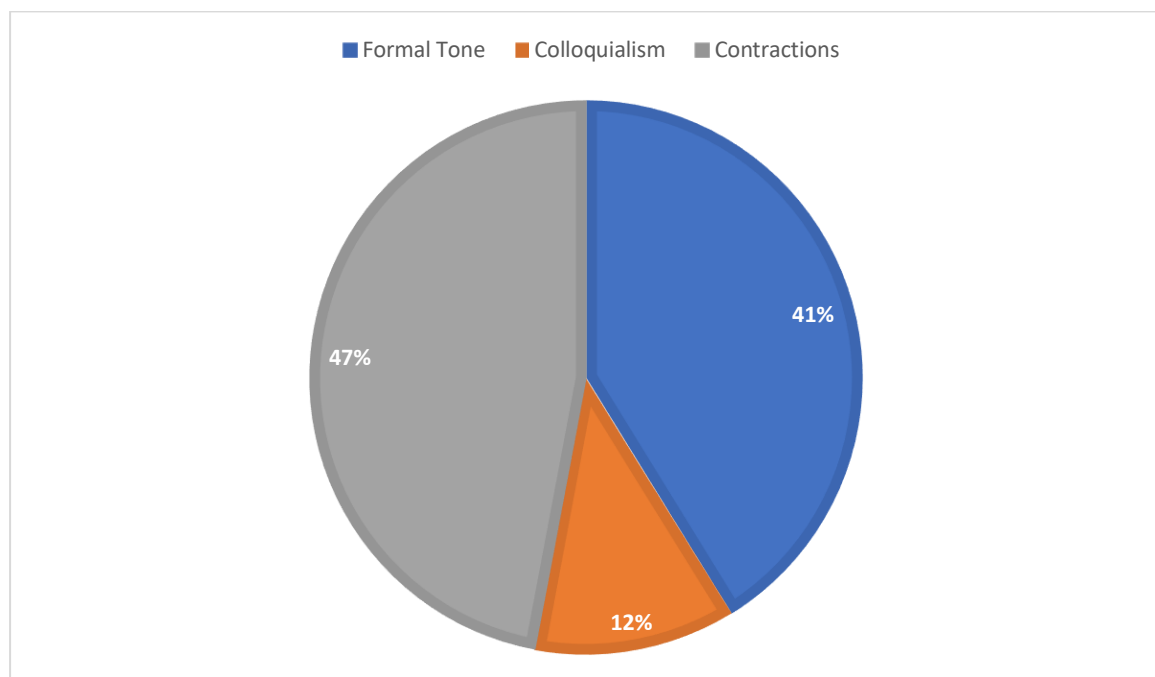
The purpose of this section is to provide an in-depth insight into the investigated phenomenon of the academic writing proficiency related to third year LMD students at the department of Letters and English Language. Therefore, the obtained data from the content analysis will be analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively and interpreted on the light of the earlier established research questions and hypotheses so as to seek answers and provide evidence.

### ***2.2.1 Data Analysis and Interpretation***

In order to answer the research questions and hypotheses, 10 of Third year License English students' exam papers have been analyzed as follows:

**Table 1***Formality in Third Year Students' Exam Papers*

<b>Formality</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Formal Tone</b>	7	41,19%
<b>Colloquialism</b>	2	11.76%
<b>Contractions</b>	8	47,05%
<b>Total</b>	17	100%

**Figure 5***Formality Percentage in Third Year Students' Exam Papers*

According to chart 1, upon examination of the data, it becomes evident that a considerable percentage (n=7, 41.19%) of the examination papers adhere to the expected formal tone, which is in accordance with the established norms of academic writing. It is important to note, however, that a smaller segment (n=2, 11.76%) of the papers incorporate colloquial expressions, highlighting the need for enhancement in maintaining the appropriate use of formal language. Interestingly, a significant portion (n=8, 47.05%) of the papers

analyzed utilized contractions, which may be viewed as a departure from the conventional formal writing style.

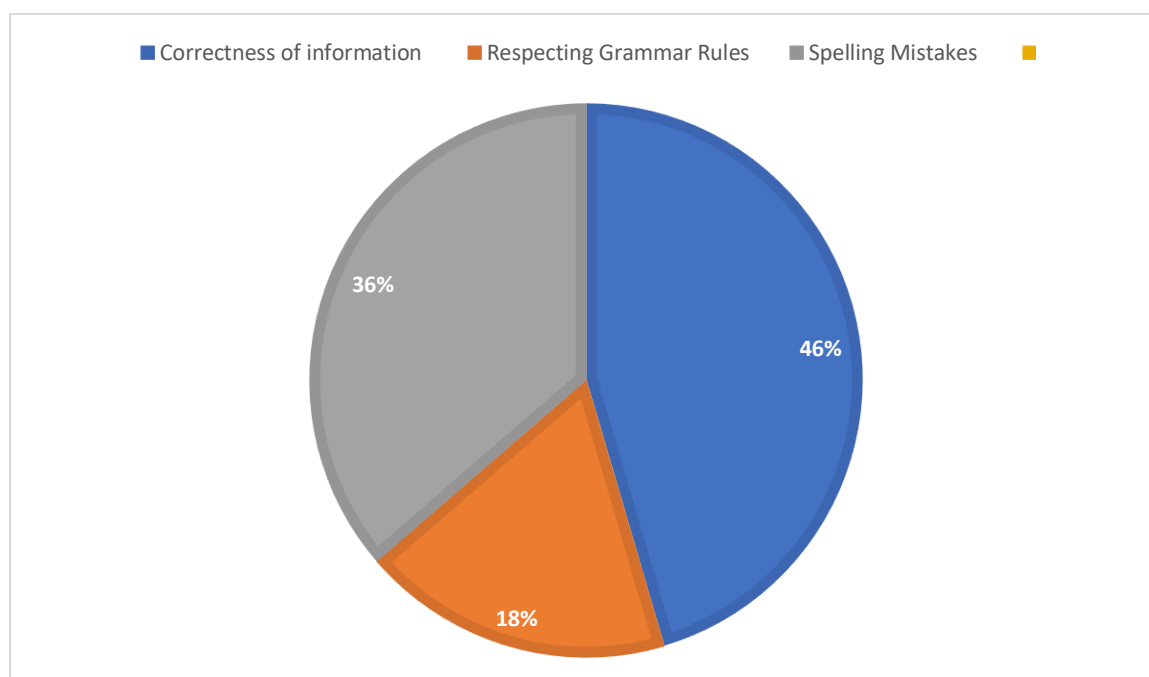
**Table 2**

*Accuracy in Third Year Students' Exam Papers*

Accuracy	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Correctness of Information</b>	10	45.45%
<b>Respecting Grammar Rules</b>	4	18.19%
<b>Spelling Mistakes</b>	8	36.36%
<b>Total</b>	22	100%

**Figure 6**

*Accuracy Percentage in Third Year Students' Exam Papers*



The data presented in the charts above shed lights on the different aspects of accuracy that are present in students' papers, according to the data, a significant portion (n=10, 45.45%) of the examined papers exhibit accuracy in presenting information, signifying a

solid understanding of the topic by the students. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that a lower percentage (n=4, 18.19%) of papers adhere to proper grammar rules, indicating a possible opportunity for enhancing grammatical precision in written work.

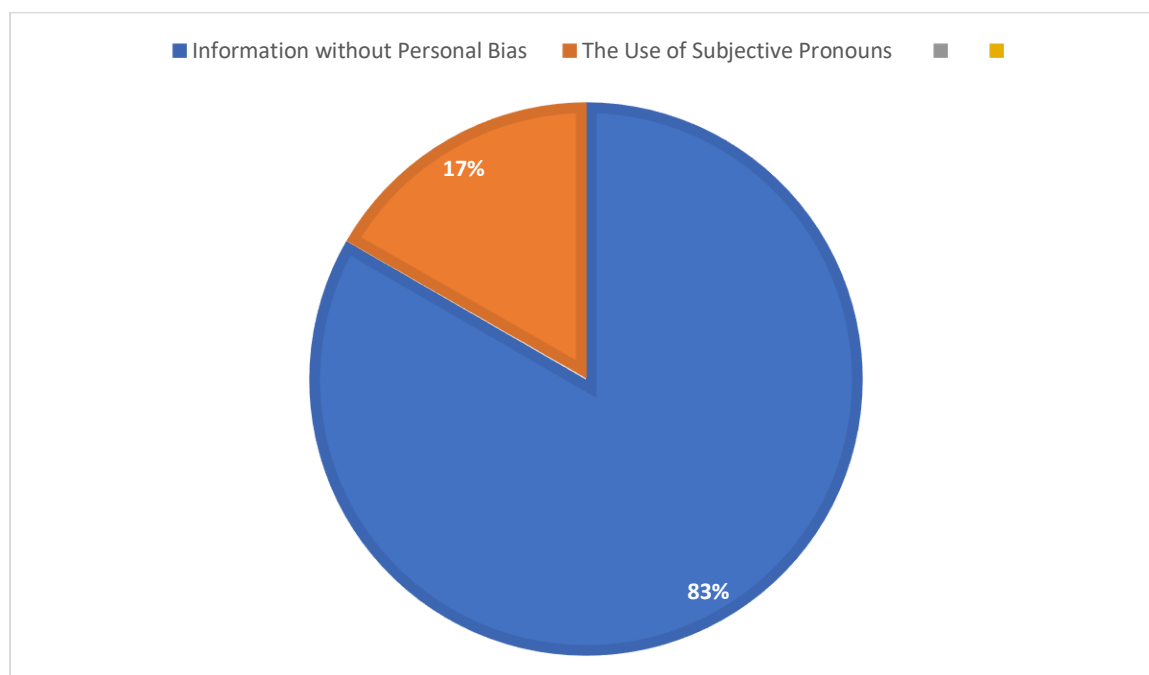
The significant number of spelling errors, which account for 36.36% of the sample, highlights a notable issue with attention to detail or language proficiency in the material under review. These mistakes could potentially hinder comprehension, credibility, and the overall effectiveness of communication. It is imperative to address these discrepancies in order to maintain professionalism and ensure clear communication in written content.

**Table 3**

*Objectivity in Third Year Students' Exam Papers*

<b>Objectivity</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Information Without Personal Bias</b>	10	83.33%
<b>The Use of Subjective Pronouns</b>	2	16,67%
<b>Total</b>	12	100%



**Figure 7***Objectivity Percentage in Third Year Students' Exam Papers*

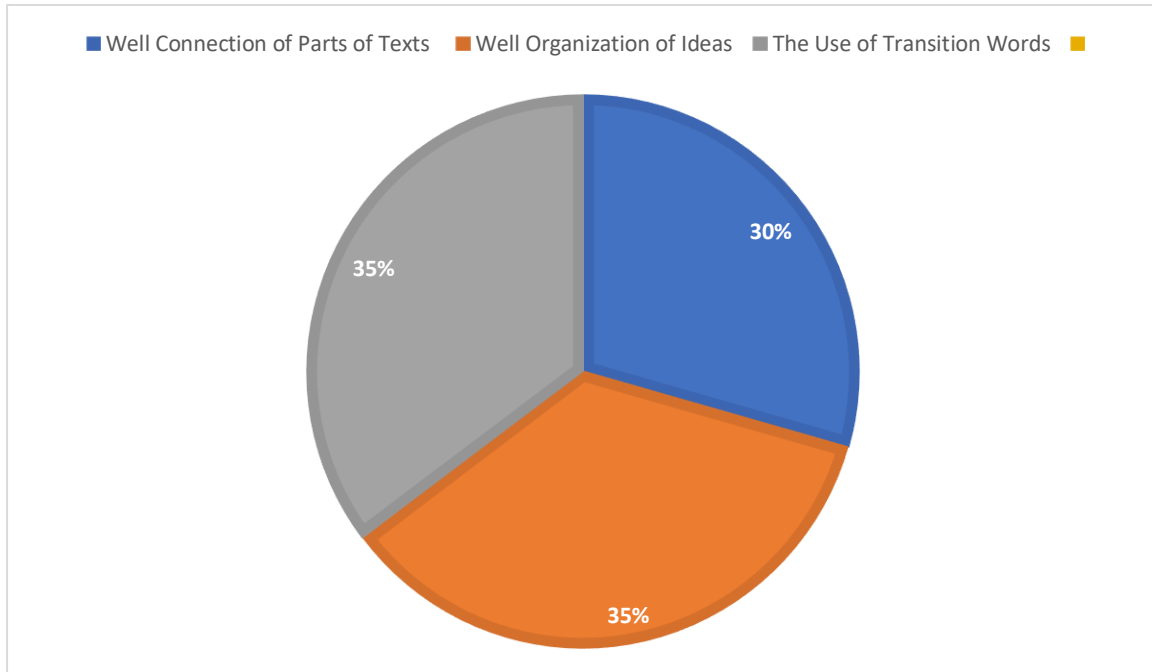
The majority of the tested papers (n=10, 83.33%) demonstrated full objectivity, presenting information without personal bias. This shows that students are able to provide factual information without introducing personal opinions. However, a small proportion of papers (n=2, 16.67%) still contained some subjective pronouns, suggesting that further guidance or training is needed to maintain objectivity in academic writing.

**Table 4***Coherence and Cohesion in Third Year Students' Exam Papers*

<b>Coherence and Cohesion</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Well Connection of Parts of Text</b>	5	29.42%
<b>Well Organization of Ideas</b>	6	35.29%
<b>The Use of Transition Words</b>	6	35.29%
<b>Total</b>	17	100%

**Figure 8**

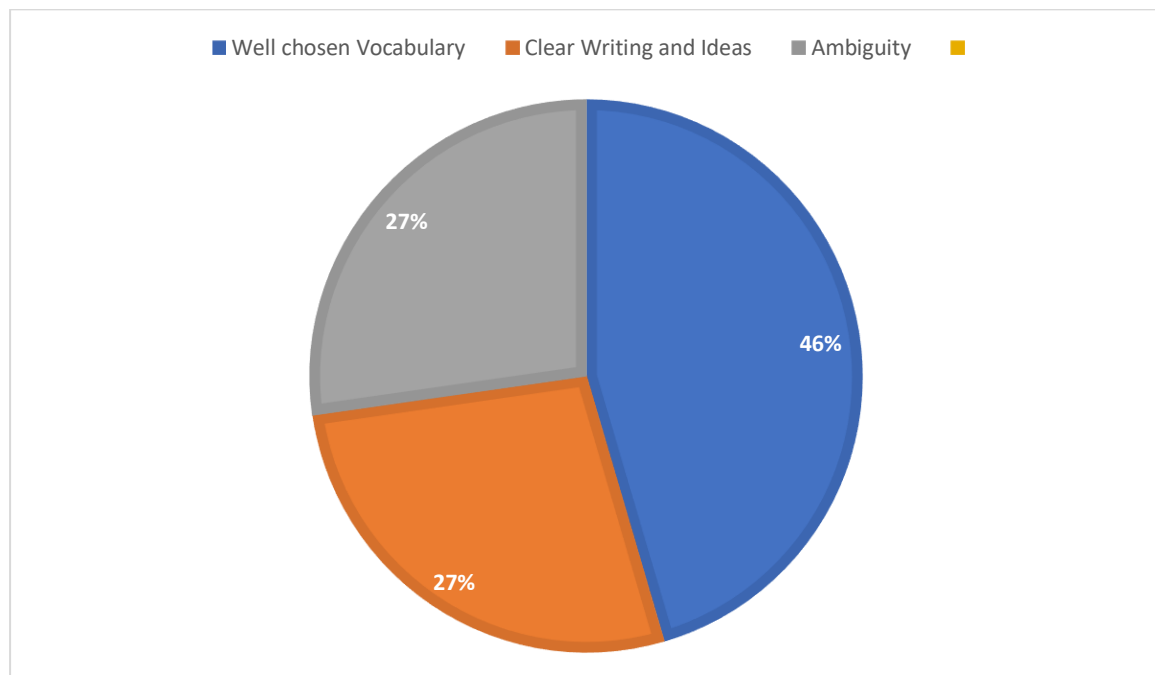
*Coherence and Cohesion Percentage in Third Year Students' Exam Papers*



The results presented in Table 4 provide valuable insights into the coherence and cohesion of the examined papers, with a specific focus on three essential criteria: the connection between different parts of the text, the organization of ideas, and the utilization of transitional words. It is worth noting that (n=5, 29.42%) of the papers demonstrate a commendable organization of content, indicating a structured and well-presented information. Furthermore, (n=6, 35.29%) of the papers exhibit both well-organized ideas and effective use of transitional words, indicating a higher level of coherence and a seamless flow between concepts. These findings emphasize the significance of clarity and logical progression in written communication, highlighting areas where enhancements can be made to improve overall readability and comprehension.

**Table 5***Clarity and Precision in Third Year Students' Exam Papers*

Clarity and Precision	Frequency	Percentage
Well- chosen vocabulary	5	45.46%
Clear Writing and Ideas	3	27.27%
Ambiguity	3	27.27 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 9***Clarity and Precision Percentage in Third Year Students' Exam Papers*

The information provided in Table 5 gives valuable perspectives into assessing the clarity and precision of the papers by examining three key elements: the use of carefully selected words, clarity in writing and expression of ideas, and the presence of ambiguity. Notably, (n=5,45.46%) of participants showed proficiency in using vocabulary relevant to the civilization module, indicating a solid understanding of the terminology and concepts. On the other hand, (n=3,27.27%) displayed clarity in their writing and idea expression but also

exhibited some ambiguity, suggesting room for improvement in conveying information clearly and without ambiguity. These results highlight the significance of precision and clarity in academic writing, stressing the importance of clear and unambiguous communication to effectively convey ideas and concepts.

### ***2.2.2 Discussion of Implications of Results***

**Answering the First Research Questions:** Do university students possess the skills necessary to be proficient in their academic writings?

According to the results obtained from the content analysis, it is clear to find an answer to the first question. The data analyzed reveal that the assessment of students' civilization examination papers offers a comprehensive understanding into their competence in academic writing. While the evaluation indicates that many students display a strong understanding of formal language and accurate presentation of information, there are specific areas that require enhancement. One such area is the adherence to formal language conventions (contraction, and a small portion of colloquialism) which ensures that written communication conforms to the expected norms of academic discourse.

While some students exhibit proficiency in this aspect, others may benefit from additional guidance and practice to consistently utilize formal language structures. Moreover, the results emphasize the significance of improving grammatical precision. Although students may possess a basic grasp of grammar, ensuring accuracy in their writing can greatly enhance the clarity and impact of their communication. Additionally, the necessity for enhancing coherence is evident from the analysis. Coherence involves the logical organization and connection of ideas in a written piece, contributing to its overall readability and understanding. Addressing this aspect involves structuring thoughts in a coherent manner and ensuring seamless transitions between ideas. The presence of spelling errors and occasional

ambiguity in students' writing further underscores the need for improvement. Spelling mistakes can diminish the professionalism and credibility of written work, while ambiguity can impede reader comprehension. Therefore, it is essential to offer students continuous support and reinforcement of academic writing skills throughout their university studies.

Therefore, the findings suggest a mixed level of proficiency, where university students possess varying levels of proficiency in their academic writing skills, as indicated by the results obtained from content analysis.

**Answering the Second Research question:** To what extent do third year English learners write academically in their exam papers?

The examination of students' civilization exam papers reveals crucial insights into their academic writing skills across different themes. First, in terms of formality (Theme 1, see table 1), the majority of students effectively maintained a formal tone in line with academic conventions. However, there was a noticeable inconsistency in the use of contractions, and minimal use of colloquialism, indicating a need for improvement in consistently adhering to formal language structures. Second, for accuracy (Theme 2, see table 2), while students demonstrated correctness in presenting information, there were concerns regarding adherence to proper grammar rules and the prevalence of spelling errors, highlighting areas for improvement in grammatical precision and attention to detail. Moving on to objectivity (Theme 3, see table 3), all papers-maintained objectivity by presenting information without personal bias, although a few contained subjective pronouns, which is a positive overall observation. Regarding coherence and cohesion (Theme 4, have a look at table 4), while many papers showed good organization and effective use of transition words, there were instances of mixed or unclear ideas, emphasizing the importance of reinforcing cohesion and coherence structures in academic writing. Finally, in terms of clarity and

precision (Theme 5, table 5), while the majority of papers demonstrated a sophisticated vocabulary selection and clarity in writing style, some exhibited occasional ambiguities and unclear data, highlighting the need for consistent clarity and precision throughout the writing. Linking these findings to the second research question, it is evident that students demonstrate varying degrees of academic writing proficiency, but there are areas that require improvement. The analysis suggests that many students display characteristics of academic writing, such as a formal tone, factual accuracy, and objectivity. However, there are noticeable gaps in maintaining formal language conventions, grammatical precision, and clarity.

Therefore, it is evident that students exhibit varying levels of proficiency across different aspects of academic writing, including formality, accuracy, objectivity, coherence, and clarity. While many students demonstrate characteristics of academic writing, such as a formal tone, factual accuracy, and objectivity, there are noticeable gaps in adhering to formal language conventions, grammatical precision, and clarity. These findings indicate a mixed level of proficiency among students, with areas that require improvement.

Considering these findings, it can be argued that while there may be a variety of academic writing aspects used in exam essays and academic writing proficiency, the relationship is intricate and multifaceted. Factors such as individual student abilities, prior knowledge, learning environments, and instructional support all play significant roles in shaping students' writing proficiency. While there are indications of a relationship between the variety of academic writing aspects used in exam essays and academic writing proficiency, further investigation is needed to fully understand the complexities of this relationship.

While the majority of students maintained a formal tone consistent with academic standards, there were occasional lapses in adhering to formal language conventions. Specifically, the analysis revealed limited use of colloquialisms, indicating that while some colloquial language may be present, it is not widespread in students' exam essays. This discovery contradicts the assumption that colloquial language is prevalent in students' written works. Instead, the evidence points towards the necessity of improving students' command of formal language structures in academic writing.

### **Section Three: Limitations, implications, and Further Suggestions**

This section will discuss three items. The first item presents the limitations of the study, the second one, proposes potential pedagogical implications, and the last item exhibits further suggestions and recommendations.

#### ***2.3.1 Limitation of the Study***

Despite the attempt to have an elaborated research study, there are always obstacles that lead to find restrictions for this work and they are as follows:

- An interview was going to be conducted and analyzed in order to strengthen the study, however, there was a lack of teachers of third year (only 03 teachers), and they were temporary over the previous years which lead to the elimination of the interview.
- Some difficulties were found in catching teachers via emails, probably because of the high pressure of receiving emails from students.
- Difficulties were faced in reading some of the students' exam papers due to their bad handwriting.
- the insufficiency of quantitative data, which necessitated a greater reliance on qualitative content analysis. While quantitative data can provide broad, generalizable

insights, the available quantitative data for this study was limited in scope and depth. Despite these limitations, the qualitative data proved invaluable in uncovering the underlying themes and patterns that were not apparent through the limited quantitative data. Future research should aim to address these limitations by incorporating a more balanced mix of both quantitative and qualitative data, ensuring a more robust and comprehensive analysis.

### ***2.3.2 Pedagogical Implications:***

According to the literature review and the results obtained from investigating the academic writing proficiency among university students, the study arrives to establish a number of pedagogical implications to reduce the obstacles related to academic writing, classified as follows:

- Incorporate explicit instruction in academic writing skills into the curriculum across subject areas. The guidelines should cover aspects such as paper development, argumentation, evidence inclusion, and citation conventions.
- Increase genre awareness by introducing students to different types of academic writing (e.g., research papers, essays, literature reviews) and teaching them the conventions and expectations associated with each genre.
- Emphasizes a process-oriented approach to writing, including pre-writing activities, drafting, peer review, revision, and editing.
- Encourage frequent feedback on student writing and provide opportunities for revision based on feedback. Incorporate peer review sessions to increase students' ability to critically evaluate and improve their own writing.
- Enhance academic writing instruction by incorporating technology tools and resources, including plagiarism detection software, writing analysis tools, and online writing communities for valuable peer feedback.



### ***2.3.3 Further Suggestions and Recommendations***

In the light of overcoming the previous limitations and the pedagogical implications for the enhancement of academic writing, the following suggestions are provided from the data collection results:

- Implement a longitudinal writing development program that spans multiple semesters or years, allowing students to gradually develop and refine their academic writing skills over time. Such courses may include sequential writing courses or writing-intensive modules integrated into existing courses.
- Faculty Development Workshops: Faculty development workshops are conducted to enhance faculty knowledge and skills in teaching academic writing. Provide training in effective writing instruction strategies and assessment practices and provide constructive feedback to students.
- Encourage the inclusion of multimodal writing assignments that allow students to express their ideas in a variety of formats, including text, images, video, and interactive media. This approach can address different learning styles and improve students' digital skills.
- Design a collaborative writing project that requires students to work together to plan, draft, and revise a written document. Collaborative writing promotes peer learning, teamwork, and a collective sense of responsibility for the quality of the final product.
- Regular assessment and evaluation of students' writing abilities at different stages of their academic careers. Use assessment data to make instructional decisions, track student progress, and identify areas for targeted intervention and support.

### **Conclusion**

To draw a conclusion to this chapter and on the basis of the analysis of the content analysis of students' exam papers, one can deduce that through the analysis of third year BA English university students of the Department of English at Laarbi Tébessi University - Tébessa- exam papers, the academic writing proficiency is of a mixed level of proficiency, where students' writings align with the academic conventions, but lack some.

Moreover, the findings obtained from the data collection tool was discussed according to the research questions and hypotheses. Going along with the findings, some crucial pedagogical implications are revealed to overcome the obstacles and issues related to this research study. To conclude, this chapter ends with some suggestions and recommendations to highlight further extensive research.

## General Conclusion

The current study focuses on the investigation about the proficiency of academic written language among third year university students. This dissertation is divided into two main parts: theoretical and practical. First the theoretical chapter is devoted to reviewing the relevant literature and it consists of two sections. The first section focuses on the definition and importance of academic writing skills for university students in their academic fields, with its main influencing factors. The second section represents style and its relationship to academic writing, in addition to the distinction between the academic and non-academic language shedding light on the main key features of academic writing.

Second, the practical chapter is divided into three sections. To begin, the first one, highlights the research methodology procedures, including study design, sample and setting, research instrument, data collection, and analysis procedures. On the other hand, the second section contains data analysis and interpretations, and the discussion of the final results.

Finally, the last section reveals the limitations of the research study, pedagogical implications, and further suggestions. Furthermore, the results of the research questions and hypotheses are obtained through a content analysis of the exam papers of third year BA English students of the Department of English at Chiekh Laarbi Tébessi University – Tébessa.

These results show the value of the research questions. According to the first question of possessing the skill to be proficient in academic writing, the results indicate a mixed level of proficiency, respecting aspects as such; objectivity, accuracy, cohesion, and neglecting some like clarity of ideas, grammar rules, formal conventions, and spelling mistakes. However, the second question addresses the extent of writing academically in the exam essays of the students. The results show that students' writing is somehow proficient as the

results indicate, levels of proficiency is a combination of the main features of academic writing. As a result, the first research hypothesis which claims the significant correlation between the diversity of the academic writing aspects used in exam essays of third year students is partially confirmed. While the second assumption which states that colloquialism is present in third year students' exam papers is not fully supported.

To conclude with all what has been mentioned, the findings from the content analysis indicate that students exhibit different levels of proficiency in academic writing. Although there are signs of improvement and potential for further development, there are also specific areas that need more attention, such as maintaining consistency in formal language conventions, ensuring grammatical accuracy, and achieving clarity and precision. Hence, it can be inferred that students are demonstrating some degree of academic writing, but there is still a room for enhancing and refining their skills in the academic domain.

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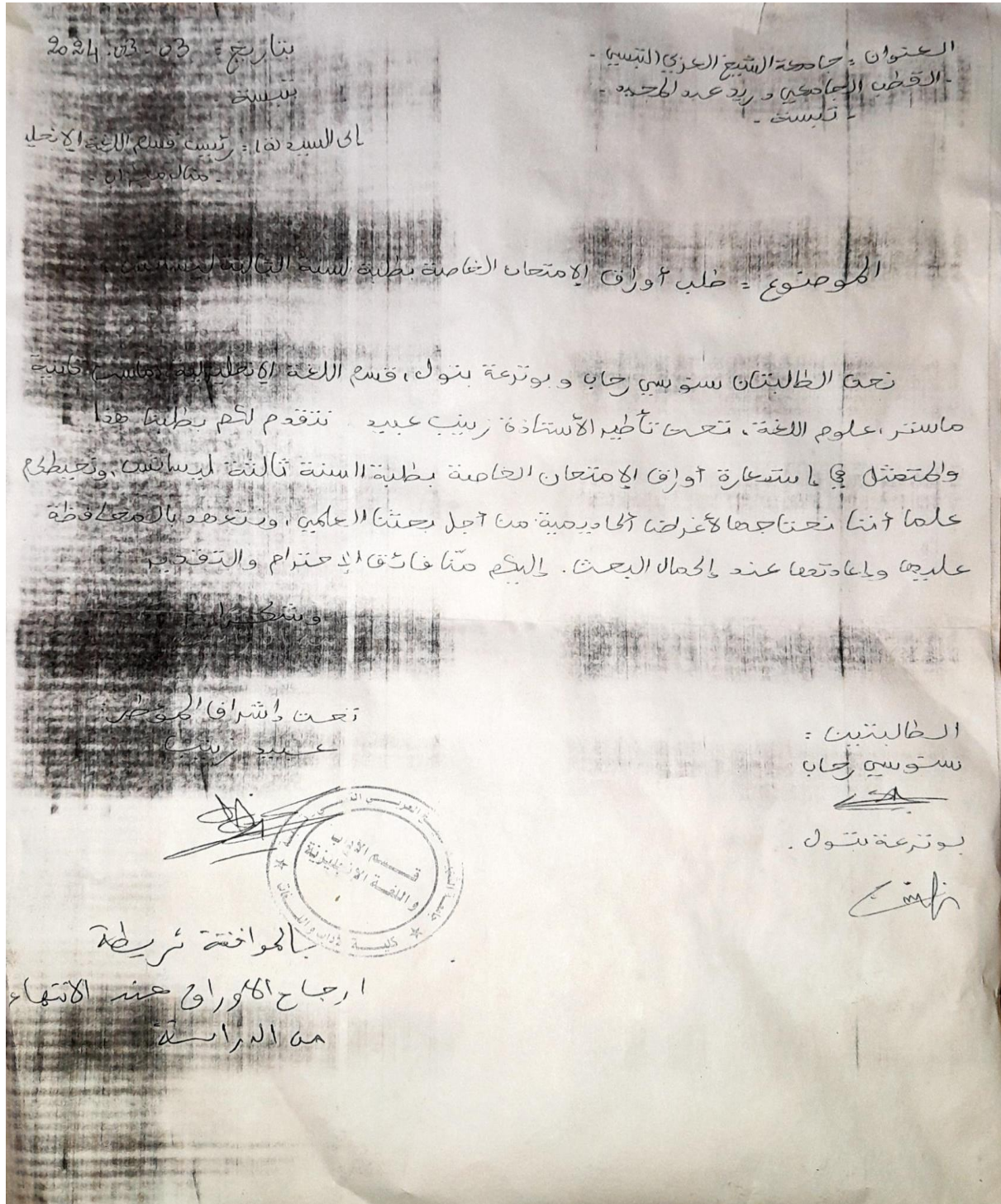


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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### The Consent of Borrowing Third Year Students Exam Papers



**Appendix B****Content Analysis Rubric**

<b>Formality</b>	Formal Style, avoids colloquialism language or slangs (respecting British Academic Language)
<b>Accuracy</b>	Correctness of the information, respecting grammar rules, and spelling mistakes
<b>Objectivity</b>	presenting information and arguments without personal bias or subjectivity
<b>Coherence and Cohesion</b>	different parts of a written text are well connected together, and the ideas are organized and linked effectively.
<b>Clarity and Precision</b>	Well chosen vocabulary to convey meaning, and clear writing (avoiding ambiguity, jargon, and unnecessary complexity).

## الملخص

الكتابة الأكاديمية تتخطى كونها مجرد مهارة؛ فهي تعمل كوسيلة لإشراك الفكر وتعزيز التفكير النقدي. ونتيجة لذلك، فإن اكتساب الخبرة في الكتابة الأكاديمية أمر بالغ الأهمية بالنسبة لطلاب الجامعات. وهذه الخبرة لا تيسر التعبير الفعال للأفكار فحسب، بل تعزز أيضاً القدرة على كتابة المعلومات الأكاديمية وتوليّفها وتقييمها. والهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو الكشف عن الكفاءة في الكتابة الأكاديمية ومداهها بين طلاب الجامعات، وتحديدًا طلبة السنة الثالثة ليسانس. واعتمدت الدراسة أسلوب البحث الكمي والنوعي على حد سواء. ويركز التفسير الكمي على البيانات الرقمية والمتغيرات القابلة للقياس، في حين يركز التفسير النوعي على الرؤى الوصفية وغير الرقمية والتحليل الذاتي. ومن ثم، أُجري تحليل للمضمون للإجابة على أسئلة البحث وهي: (1) هل لدى طلاب السنة الثالثة ليسانس المهارات اللازمة ليتقنوا كتاباتهم الأكاديمية؟ (2) إلى أي مدى يكتب المتعلمون الإنجليزيون في السنة الثالثة أكاديمياً في أوراق امتحاناتهم؟ وقد أسفر تحليل ورقات امتحانات الطلاب عن عدة نتائج؛ أولاً، مستوى مختلط من الكفاءة بين طلاب الجامعات في الكتابة الأكاديمية، مع نقاط القوة التي لوحظت في مجالات مثل الموضوعية، والحفاظ على اللهجة الرسمية، والاتساق، ولكن نقاط الضعف لوحظت في وضوح الأفكار، والتقيّد بقواعد القواعد، والاتفاقيات اللغوية الرسمية، ودقة التهجئة. ثانياً، على الرغم من مستوى الكفاءة المختلط، تظهر مقالات امتحانات الطلاب درجة من الكفاءة في الكتابة الأكاديمية، تشمل سمات رئيسية مثل الموضوعية والدقة والاتساق والتماسك. وثالثاً، يظهر الطلاب مستويات متفاوتة من الكفاءة عبر جوانب الكتابة الأكاديمية، بما في ذلك الشكلية والدقة والموضوعية والاتساق والوضوح، غير أن هناك ثغرات ملحوظة في الانضمام إلى اتفاقيات اللغات الرسمية، والدقة البرمجية، ودقة التهجئة. وأخيراً، يمكن استخدام هذه النتائج كنموذج أولي للبحوث المقبلة. الكلمات الرئيسية: الكتابة الأكاديمية، الكفاءة، النجاح الأكاديمي.

## Résumé

L'écriture académique va au-delà d'une simple compétence ; elle fonctionne comme un moyen de s'engager intellectuellement et d'encourager la pensée critique. Par conséquent, la maîtrise de la rédaction académique est cruciale pour les étudiants universitaires, car elle leur fournit les outils nécessaires à la réussite académique et à l'avancement intellectuel. Cette expertise facilite non seulement l'expression efficace des idées, mais cultive également la capacité à écrire de manière académique, à synthétiser et à évaluer l'information. L'objectif principal de cette étude est de révéler la compétence en matière d'écriture académique et son étendue parmi les étudiants universitaires, en particulier les apprenants d'anglais de troisième année de BA. L'étude a adopté une méthode de recherche à la fois quantitative et qualitative, dans le cadre de laquelle une analyse de contenu a été menée pour répondre aux questions et hypothèses de recherche. L'analyse des copies d'examen des étudiants a permis de tirer plusieurs conclusions : a) un niveau de compétence mitigé parmi les étudiants universitaires en matière d'écriture académique, avec des points forts observés dans des domaines tels que l'objectivité et la cohérence, mais des faiblesses notées dans la clarté des idées, le respect des règles de grammaire, les conventions linguistiques formelles et la précision de l'orthographe. b) Malgré le niveau de compétence mitigé, les copies d'examen des étudiants démontrent un certain degré de compétence en matière d'écriture académique, englobant des caractéristiques clés telles que l'objectivité, l'exactitude, la cohérence et la cohésion. c) La recherche confirme partiellement l'hypothèse proposant une corrélation significative entre la diversité des aspects de l'écriture académique dans les essais d'examen des étudiants de troisième année. Bien qu'il y ait des forces notables dans divers aspects, il y a aussi des domaines qui nécessitent une amélioration. d) Contrairement à la deuxième hypothèse, la présence de langage familier dans les travaux d'examen des étudiants n'a pas été confirmée, ce qui indique une tendance à

maintenir les conventions de la langue formelle dans les écrits académiques. Enfin, ces résultats peuvent servir de modèle brut pour de futures recherches.

*Mots-clés* : Rédaction académique, compétence