

Analyzing The Difficulties faced by Iraqi EFL Learners in Writing Essays

Rusul Assim Abbood

Methods of Teaching English Language

University of Babylon/ College of basic of Education/English Department

Corresponding author: russul.asim@uobabylon.edu.iq

Date of research submission :19/5/2026

Date of publication acceptance : 28/6/2026

Date of publication :19/7/2026

FA/202607/30E/21/726



[Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://alfatehjournal.uodiyala.edu.iq/index.php/jfath/index)

<https://alfatehjournal.uodiyala.edu.iq/index.php/jfath/index>

<https://alfatehjournal.uodiyala.edu.iq/index.php/jfath/copyright>

Abstract

The researcher explored the challenges faced by English language learners in essay writing. The study began with a theoretical overview of essential writing skills, addressing fundamental aspects of essay composition. It then moved to a practical examination, analyzing the process and results of a test administered to third-grade English language learners at the College of Basic Education, University of Babylon. The research aimed to achieve two primary objectives: first, to identify the difficulties learners encounter while learning essay writing, and second, to provide clarity on effective methods for teaching essay writing in English. A total of 100 third-grade EFL students from the English Department participated in the test, where they were tasked with answering a series of questions.

key words : Essay, writing , learners , analyze, skills

تحليل الصعوبات التي يواجهها المتعلمون العراقيون اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية في كتابة المقالات

رسل عاصم عبود

طرائق تدريس اللغة الانكليزية

جامعة بابل / كلية التربية الاساسية / قسم اللغة الانكليزية

Corresponding author: russul.asim@uobabylon.edu.iq

تاريخ استلام البحث : 2026/5/19

تاريخ قبول النشر : 2026/6/28 - تاريخ النشر 2026/7/19

FA/202607/30E/21/726



[Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

<https://alfatehjournal.uodiyala.edu.iq/index.php/jfath/index>

<https://alfatehjournal.uodiyala.edu.iq/index.php/jfath/copyright>

الخلاصة: استكشف الباحث التحديات التي يواجهها متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية في كتابة المقالات. بدأت الدراسة بنظرة عامة نظرية على مهارات الكتابة الأساسية، متناولة الجوانب الجوهرية لتكوين المقال. ثم انتقلت إلى دراسة عملية، محللة عملية ونتائج اختبار أجري على ١٠٠ طالب من طلاب المرحلة الثالثة في كلية التربية الأساسية بجامعة بابل. هدف البحث إلى تحقيق هدفين رئيسيين: أولهما، تحديد الصعوبات التي يواجهها المتعلمون أثناء تعلم كتابة المقالات، وثانيهما، توضيح الطرق الفعالة لتدريس كتابة المقالات باللغة الإنجليزية. شارك في الاختبار مئة طالب من طلاب المرحلة الثالثة في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، حيث طُلب منهم الإجابة على سلسلة من الأسئلة

الكلمات المفتاحية: المقالات، الكتابة، المتعلمون، تحليل، مهارات

1.1 Problem

Most EFL learners have challenges in learning the English language because of the circumstances in which they live, considering the lack of resources that should be available to encourage them to learn the English language. Therefore, writing is one of the skills that needs to be taught in certain ways depending on different methods to facilitate it for learners, and writing an essay is an important material to help EFL learners write in a correct way.

Writing is considered one of the most complex and challenging skills for English language learners, as learners face numerous obstacles in mastering this ability. The process of learning to write heavily relies on the teaching methods employed and the support resources available, highlighting the importance of providing tools and approaches that enable learners to acquire this skill effectively. Essay writing, in particular, is a crucial extension of sentence construction, requiring learners to eventually master the art of crafting essays. This skill demands continuous focus and motivation to be properly developed. For this reason, learners encounter many difficulties on their journey to grasp the fundamentals and techniques of proper writing.

1.2 Aims

1. Clarifying how to teach writing an essay in the English language.
2. Investigating the difficulties that learners face in learning how to write an essay.
3. Explore the steps and types of writing an essay.

1.3 Hypothesis

EFL learners face difficulties writing even a short paragraph that's related to the poor skill infrastructure of writing.

1.4 Procedures

1. Providing both theoretical insights and practical discussions on the process of essay writing.
2. Selecting a random sample of EFL learners to evaluate their essay writing skills.

1.5 Limits

One hundred third-grade EFL learners from the English Department at the College of Basic Education, University of Babylon, participated in the test and were asked to respond to several questions

2.1 Definitions of Essay Writing

According to Hasnawati et al. (2023), “writing is commonly regarded as a productive endeavor, as it involves the creation of written works that stem from the articulation of one's thoughts and ideas”.

Writing could be considered as a tool of expressing and inventing thoughts and ideas, like a physical as well as mental technique that organizes the sentences in different paragraphs (Nunan, 2003).)

(Cindy et al, 2020) states that “writing is one of the skills in learning language that has to be mastered. Furthermore, writing can be a bridge for people to convey their ideas or information into written form”.

One of the most effective skills in communication is writing, which EFL learners should master to express ideas and emotions (Thi Minh Uyen Phani et al., 2022).

In addition, writing is one of the basic skills that is regarded as the most difficult one because it requires a reflection of ideas as words that are organized in logical sentences

Therefore, writing an essay is a difficult task for EFL learners, who face many difficulties in writing and expressing their thoughts in writing.

(Putri, 2022) defines writing as” a process of creating a piece of written language to be read. Writing, on the other hand, is more than just converting language to symbols”.

2.2 Parts of Essay Writing

(Suliman et al., 2023) divided the term academic essay into parts and defined them as follows: “the word 'academic' as 'having to do with school or university, it means acquired by formal education at college or university and conforming to set rules and standards’”. On the other hand, the word essay is viewed by many authors in different definitions, “as a specific argument that has a theme clearly and logically expressed from start to finish”. “A piece of writing in prose on one subject”. “An essay is 'an intellectual argument that develops from the ideas and theories you have been taught. “It is an expression of your understanding of the course's themes and topics as they are being presented to you in lectures and seminars’”. Finally “an essay is a short piece of writing on a particular subject either by a student as part of a course of study, or by a professional writer to be published’”.

Writing is the most productive and difficult skill among the skills, as it requires the ability to comprehend and coordinate vocabulary in a homogeneous linguistic, grammatical, and orthographic manner to formulate a correct written text that expresses the learner’s state. Also, it is a comfortable area in reflecting the learner’s thoughts calmly and more focused than speaking, as well as sharing their ideas by reflecting them in the form of coherent words and sentences, reflecting ideas and information in a correct scientific and linguistic form (Nguyen et al, 2020).

2.3 Steps of writing Essay

According to Rohim (2017), there are five steps in the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.

1. Prewriting
2. Drafting
3. Revising
4. Editing
5. Publishing

2.4 Types of Essay writing

According to Caulfield (2023), there are four main types of essays as follows:

Argumentative

- Forming an opinion via research
- Building an evidence-based argument

Expository

- Knowledge of a topic
- Communicating information clearly

Narrative

- Creative language use
- Presenting a compelling narrative

Descriptive

- Creative language use
- Describing sensory details

3.1 Objectives of The Test

The present study has been designed to examine the difficulties encountered by Iraqi EFL learners in essay writing.

3.2 The Sample

One hundred third-grade EFL learners from the English Department at the College of Basic Education, University of Babylon, participated in the test. They were asked to respond to several questions. The researcher selected third-grade students for this study because they are currently learning essay writing as part of their coursework.

3.3 The Population

A sample of learners from the third grade in the Department of English, College of Basic Education, University of Babylon, during the academic year (2025). It consists of (100) EFL learners who are native speakers of Iraqi Arabic and have a similar EFL background.

3.4 Test Design

It consisted of one question. This question was designed as a multiple-choice question to assess the general information of EFL learners and evaluate their knowledge in essay writing. The

question included ten items, and the learners were required to tick the right answer.

4.1 Overview

This section presented an overview of the test and its results to prove the hypotheses, which were “ EFL learners find it difficult to write in English, even a short paragraph, which is related to poor skill infrastructure of writing ”. So, the following table shows the results and the discussion of the test.

4.2 Results and discussion

In the following table, there will be a statistical analysis of the results and answers of EFL learners.

No. of Items	No. of Correct Choices	%	No. of Incorrect Choices	%
1.	70	70%	30	30%
2.	30	30%	70	70%
3.	40	40%	60	60%
4.	60	60%	40	40%
5.	20	20%	80	80%
6.	50	50%	50	50%
7.	50	50%	50	50%
8.	30	30%	70	70%
9.	50	50%	50	50%
10.	40	40%	60	60%
Total	440	440	560	560

The results of the table above showed the correct and incorrect responses of the EFL learners in writing an essay as multiple choices in a test that was made to investigate the level of the learners in writing. The responses of the first item were (70%) correct and (30%) incorrect. On the other hand, the correct responses of the second item were (30%), while the incorrect responses were (70%). Furthermore, the third item had (40%) correct responses, but the incorrect responses were (60%). According to item number four, the correct responses were (60%),

and the incorrect responses were (40%). The fifth item had the correct responses (20%), and the incorrect responses were (80%). In addition to that, item number six, the correct responses were (50%), and the incorrect responses were (50%). While the seventh item, the correct responses were (50%), and the incorrect responses were (50%). The responses of item number eight were (30%) correct and (70%) incorrect responses. Like that, the responses of item number nine were (50%) correct and (50%) incorrect responses. As well, the responses of item number ten were (40%) correct and (60%) incorrect responses. And finally, the total percentage of the correct responses was (440), and the percentage of the incorrect responses was (560), which means that EFL learners face difficulties in writing an essay.

The question of the test consisted of ten multiple-choice items. The first item was about the types of essay, the second item was handled the structure of essay, the third item discussed the steps of writing an essay, the fourth item dealt with other types of essay, the fifth item again concerned the structure, the sixth item was around other steps, the seventh item regarded the types, the eighth item was about the steps, the ninth item was over types, and finally the tenth item was arranged the steps of writing essay.

The Conclusion

An essay is a fundamental material that enhances writing skills. Moreover, writing is one of the basic skills that is regarded as the most difficult one because it requires a reflection of ideas as words that are organized in logical sentences. Therefore, writing an essay is a difficult task for EFL learners, who face many difficulties in writing and expressing their thoughts in writing. Most EFL learners have challenges in learning the English language because of the circumstances in which they live, considering the lack of resources that should be available to encourage them to learn the language. Therefore, writing is one of the skills that needs to be taught in certain ways depending on different methods to facilitate it for learners, and writing an essay is an important material to help EFL learners learn how to write in a correct way. According to the results of

the research, it is found that the total percentage of the correct responses was (440) and the percentage of the incorrect responses was (560), which means that EFL learners face difficulties in writing an essay.

References

1. Caulfield, J. (2023). *The Four Main Types of Essay | Quick Guide with Examples*. <https://www.scribbr.com/academic-essay/essay-types/>
2. Cindy Mutiara Saprina, Abdul Rosyid, Yanti Suryanti. (2020). *Difficulties in Developing Idea Encountered by Students in Writing Argumentative Essay*. Pakuan University, Bogor, Indonesia
3. Hasnawati¹, E. Mujahidin², Hendri Tanjung³ (2023). *Analyzing Students' Difficulties in Writing English Essay*. International Journal of Social Science And Human Research. ISSN (print): 2644-0679, ISSN (online): 2644-0695. Volume 06 Issue 10 October 2023.
4. Nguyen, H. T. N., Pham, T. U., Phan, T. M. U. (2020). *DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING ESSAYS OF ENGLISH MAJORED SOPHOMORES AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY, VIETNAM*. European Journal of English Language Teaching ISSN: 2501-7136 ISSN-L: 2501-7136.
5. Nunan, D. (2003). *Practical English Language Teaching*. International Edition, McGraw-Hill, Singapore, 88.
6. Putri, M. (2022). *An Analysis of Essay Writing Difficulties Faced by The Third Semester Students in English Language Education of Fkip university Islam Riau*. Perpustakaan Universitas Islam Riau.
7. Rohim, A. (2017). *Essay Writing How To Write An Essay*. publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343385508>.
8. Suliman, J.M. A., Elmahbob, K. Y. A., Musa, S. M. S., (2023). *Difficulties Facing EFL University Students in Writing Academic Essay*. Arab Journal for Scientific Publishing (AJSP) ISSN: 2663-5798.

9. Thi Minh Uyen Phani, Thi Thuy Hang Nguyen, Thanh Trung Le. (2022). *A SURVEY ON THE DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING ESSAYS OF ENGLISH MAJORED SOPHOMORES AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY, VIETNAM*. Faculty of Linguistics and Literature, Tay Do University, Can Tho City, Vietnam.