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**The Role of the Critical Thinking in Developing
EFL students' Academic Writing Aspects
The Case of Third year English Language
Students at Kasdi Merbah Ouargla University**

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DEDICATION

To my parents Abd Elkader and Achoura

To my sisters Khadidja and Bouchra

To my brothers Slimane, Ahmed, Mokhtar, and Ibrahim

To my friends Chaima, Saida, Fatima Zahra, and Aicha

To my teachers who helped me go through and never give up

To all who cared about me and wished me success

Thank you for everything



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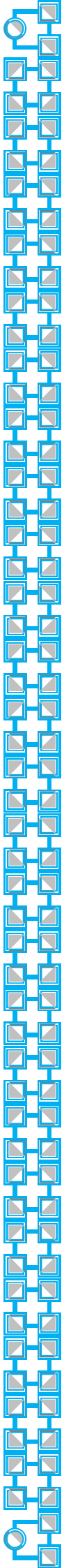
All praise is to Allah for all what I have achieved in my life, for giving me the strength and knowledge to fulfil this work. I want to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to my teacher and supervisor Dr. Sabrina Saighi for being a source of support and guidance throughout the process of this research. I also thank the members of the jury for their time and effort in providing me with their feedback to improve this work. Last but not least, I thank all the participants who helped in achieving this study.



ABSTRACT

Several studies have highlighted the importance of critical thinking in developing students' writing. This study aimed to explore the students' perceptions about the nature of the concepts critical thinking and academic writing, their characteristics, and the role of the critical thinking in developing EFL students' academic writing aspects. The current study adopted a descriptive method in which a questionnaire was submitted to third year English language students at Kasdi Merbah university- Ouargla in the academic year 2023-2024. 35 students participated in the study through answering the questionnaire. The results revealed that 83% of the students view academic writing as the formal and objective language. Meanwhile, there was wide variance in their definitions of critical thinking. On the one hand, 37% of students consider it a tool of judging and evaluating content, and 34% look at it as a problem solving process that is based in the first place, in their opinion, on analysing the issue and gathering enough information. On the other hand, 44% of the students believe that the critical thinking can develop the aspect of research and documentation in academic writing through reviewing different sources, evaluating their content and trustworthiness, and citing the sources in an appropriate way. In addition, the majority of the students (80%) supported the idea of teaching critical thinking in universities. The findings of this research can be used to identify students' weaknesses and to find solutions for overcoming them, and as a dataset for implementing critical thinking in the university curriculum to develop the students' academic writing.

Keywords: Academic Writing, Critical Thinking, Students' Perceptions, Academic Writing Aspects.



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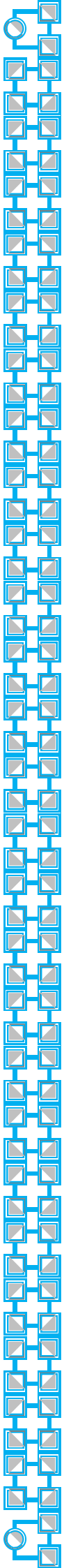
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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

Academic writing is viewed as the language of study and research. It is used in different areas such as schools, universities, and research papers and websites. Davis and McKay (1996) mentioned some of its characteristics: “the use of a formal style and a structured argument, and the need for research and documentation.... a clear pattern and development, with points numbered and ordered” (pp. 2–3). For some reasons, students encounter problems in fulfilling these qualities which pushed many researchers to conduct studies in order to explore these issues and find possible solutions. These continuous studies uncovered the essence of the term critical thinking in the writing field.

2. Related studies

In 2014, Golpour conducted a study to investigate the correlation between critical thinking and writing through testing students’ critical thinking level and writing abilities in two essay genres: argumentative and descriptive essays, and the findings revealed that the students with high critical thinking scale showed better writing performance in both genres. In other study done by Nguyen & Vo (2019), the teacher applied critical thinking skills in teaching the students the essay writing. The students passed a pretest and a posttest (the final exams) and answered a questionnaire about their point of view about this method and their writing style after the course. The test results indicated that there was improvement in students’ writing abilities, and the students acknowledged this progress in the questionnaire. Harb, Al-Shredi, Balhouq, & Ethelb (2022) established a study that aimed to explore the students’ awareness of the role of the critical thinking in enhancing their academic writing through adopting Peter Honey critical thinking questionnaire as a research instrument, and they concluded that the students were aware of the critical thinking’s role in academic writing.

3. Research Problem

Although much research has been done about the role of critical thinking in the language learning and teaching field, little research investigated its role in the writing field and specifically EFL students’ perceptions about its function. Unlike the previously mentioned study that measured students’ awareness using five Likert scale questionnaire that included statements about the writing style, the present study explores students’ perceptions through direct questions.

4. Research Objectives

This study aims to explore the EFL students' perceptions about the role of critical thinking in developing academic writing aspects. This includes their views about the nature of academic writing and critical thinking, the function of critical thinking in academic writing, and the difficulties in implementing critical thinking in academic writing.

5. The Research Questions

The present study seeks to answer the following main question

- How do the students perceive the role of critical thinking in developing academic writing aspects?

And the following sub-questions

Q.01- How do the EFL students view the nature of academic writing and critical thinking?

Q.02- - How do the EFL students perceive the role of critical thinking in developing academic writing aspects?

Q.03- What are the difficulties that EFL students face while implementing critical thinking in academic writing?

6. Research Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that the EFL students have different perspectives about the nature and characteristics of the research variables as well the role of critical thinking in developing academic writing.

7. The Significance of the Study

As any other study in its field, the main aim of this research is to extend knowledge in the language learning and teaching field. By identifying the learners' perspectives about the nature of critical thinking and its role in enhancing the academic writing, the teachers may have better idea about the ways it can be taught and implemented in teaching writing.

8. The Research Methodology

In order to answer the proposed questions, the study adopted a descriptive method where an online questionnaire was submitted to third year LMD students at the department of English language at Kasdi Merbah University- Ouargla in the academic year 2023-2024. The questions targeted the different aspects of the research problem including the nature of the key concepts, the effect of critical thinking on the academic writing aspects, and the implementation of critical thinking.

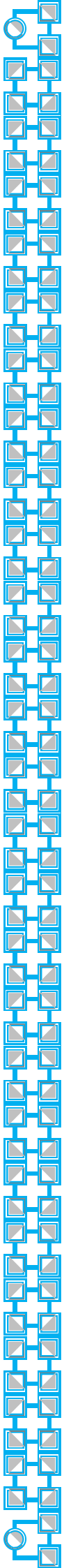
9. The Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into two parts: theoretical framework with two sections and a practical part with a single chapter. The first section presents the definition and characteristics of academic writing followed by some techniques in academic writing and then its importance and concluded by the difficulties that face students in academic writing. The second section introduces the term critical thinking, the characteristics of the critical thinkers, and its importance. After that, critical thinking is presented in the frame of academic writing in addition to some tips for using it to develop EFL students' academic writing. The second chapter is entitled 'data collection and interpretation' where data are presented, analysed, and interpreted and the results are revealed.

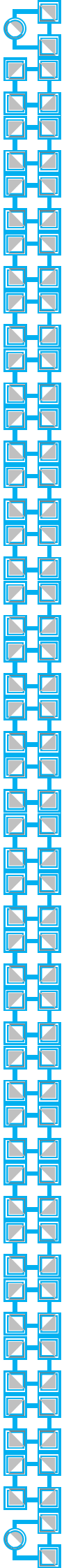
10. Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study have to be seen in light of some limitations. As a case study research, the findings of this study can't be generalised to other cases. In addition, the sample size represented in the 35 students who participated in the questionnaire is small for obtaining a thorough data because this research investigates the students' perspectives in which the large samples are more needed.

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework



1.1. Section One: Academic Writing



Introduction

Academic writing is an important tool in researchers' and students' academic journey. It adheres to a set of a strict requirements concerning the formality of the language, punctuation, and referencing catalogues. This chapter presents the definition of academic writing according to different authors, followed by its characteristics, the importance of academic writing, techniques in academic writing, and concluded by the difficulties that students face in writing academically.

1.1.1. Definition of Academic writing

Writing can be defined as a thinking process (Wilson, 2022; Khairuddin, Ismayatim, Ismail, Rahmat, & Zamri, 2022). It involves number of stages and standards that the writer must go through, and each stage demands integrating thinking and decision-making abilities. Among the numerous kinds of writing, academic writing is probably the most systematic and frequently used by the writers in different fields. It is widely used in schools and universities and considered a key criterion in evaluating research papers and dissertations. Academic writing focuses on accuracy, objectivity, and research (Bailey, 2011). In addition, it uses a specific genres and formal vocabulary related to the subject matter (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). The goal of academic writing is to reveal the truth, so the researcher must add something new to the study field whether by adding unknown information or by providing a new interpretation of already existing material (Wilson, 2022). The main feature that distinguishes academic writing from ordinary writing is the focus on ethics and documentation (Wilson, 2022).

1.1.2. The Characteristics of Academic Writing

Academic writing is identified on base of number of characteristics. They stand as a criterion in evaluating the researchers' works.

1.1.2.1. Systematic

Academic writing is a process that follows a clearly defined patterns. Each genre has a specific pattern that writers should respect to fulfil the requirements of academic writing. In this context, 'systematic' is used to refer to the restricted patterns that writers should obey in the different genres of writing. For example, essay is made up from three main parts including introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion. Meanwhile dissertation constitutes of

introduction, theoretical part (i.e. literature review), practical part, and conclusion (Bailey, 2011). The writer must be familiar with these patterns before starting the writing act.

1.1.2.2. Formal

One of the main characteristics of academic writing is formality. The writer must select wisely the vocabulary used in their essay. Formality includes lexical choices, grammar, punctuation, and spelling (Leedy & Ormard, 2021). In its turn, ‘Lexical choices’ does not include only substituting the informal words with more formal ones, but it also refers to using the field related terminology and avoiding the use of abbreviations and contracted forms for example: can’t, doesn’t, ASAP, and e.g.

1.1.2.3. Objective

The academic writer should avoid using the personal pronouns and the emotive language. The objective language includes using passive voice and the pronoun ‘they’ instead of ‘he’ or ‘she’. Objectivity forces students to write what is real not what they want it to be real (McCarthy & Ahmed, 2022). It is important to be objective in writing in order to show to the reader that the text tackles a true issue and present real solutions rather than telling life experiences.

1.1.2.4. Clear

The language must be precise and clear in order to eliminate any kind of ambiguity or misunderstanding. The sentences must be varied in their type from simple, compound, complex, and compound complex. Even though academic writing encourages using complex sentences, the students with lack of writing competence should use the simple sentences and the forms they can manage because clarity is the most important (Bailey, 2011). Clarity can be regarded not only in the use of language but also in the expression of the ideas.

1.1.2.5. Cautious

Cautious language is a main element in academic Writing. The writer must show neither certainty in results nor preference. In other words, sentences as ‘it is the best method for...’ and ‘the reason behind students’ absence is...’ should be avoided and replaced by a more cautious sentences for example: ‘this method provides a useful tools...’ and ‘the reason behind students’ absence may be...’. It is important to use this kind of cautious language to avoid misunderstanding by the readers (Bailey, 2011).

1.1.2.6. Based on Sources

The academic writing emphasises research and reviewing the literature. Thus, documentation and citation are vital tools for any academic writer. Bailey (2011) stated: “Academic writing depends on the research and ideas of others” (p. 62). Researchers rely on quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing as a writing techniques to link their works with the previous works and show the importance of their studies.

1.1.3. Techniques in Academic Writing

There are several techniques that writers use when preparing their papers. The following are the three most known techniques that all researchers apply when using other writers’ ideas

1.1.3.1. Quoting

It is the exact repetition of the original text using the quotation marks and italics. The quotations are used when the writer believes that any changes they make on the original text may change its core idea (McCarthy & Ahmed, 2022), or when the writer aims at criticizing the original idea. It is important that the writer cites the original work with mentioning the author and the page they extracted the text from. Besides, the students should not over use the quoting technique because it may be considered a lack of personality.

1.1.3.2. Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing refers to the restating of the original idea in different words and structures with maintaining the core idea of the original text (Bailey, 2011). The key feature in paraphrasing is the clarity. The student is free to write as needed to clarify the ideas of the original text, and this may lead sometimes to writing a longer passage than the original. In other words, the focus is not on the length of the paraphrased text, but on the degree of expressing the ideas of the original writer in a clear and precise way. Again, the writer must cite the original source.

1.1.3.3. Summarizing

Another widely used technique by students and researchers is summarizing. It is the restating of the original text in a shorter form with focus only on the main idea of the original text (Bailey, 2011). Unlike paraphrasing, the students must focus on the length of the two versions of the text and ensure that the summary is shorter and holds the same meaning as the

original. It is important to cite the sources that have been summarized in the text and at the end of the work in the references list.

1.1.4. The Importance of Academic Writing

“Writing is a process that a writer goes through and ends up not only with the written text, but also more understanding of the issue written through readings of material prior to the write-up” (Khairuddin et al., 2022, p. 71). As stated, academic writing improves students’ knowledge about their topic and enhances their language skills, research skills, observation skills, and analysis abilities.

In addition, academic writing is considered a vital skill in students’ academic career and an important tool for sharing ideas and arguments (Sabu & Vernandes, 2019). It maintains the learners’ sense of argumentation and persuasion. Academic writing also helps in improving time management skills. The fact that writing assignments has a deadline for submission requires the students to divide their time critically to finish their work on time. This process may seem difficult at the beginning, but it becomes easier with practice and dedication.

1.1.5. The Difficulties Facing Students in Academic Writing

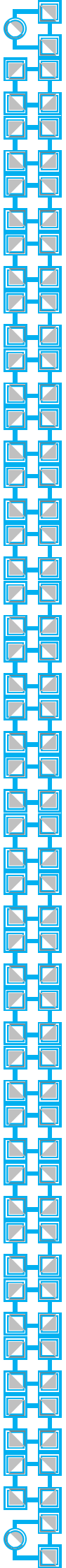
Academic writing represents a challenge for many students for different reasons. One of the issues that students may encounter is the academic language and the formatting process especially in research documents such as reports, dissertations, and academic journals. The precise formal objective language may hinder students from expressing themselves and opinions in their piece of writing and creates fear of breaking the rules. As for the formatting process, the students can find difficulty in understanding or applying certain style like referencing and using the Word programme. Khairuddin et al (2022) mentioned a list of some problems that postgraduate students encountered throughout the writing process which included: difficulties in finding suitable sources, reading sources as a time-consuming activity, lack of competence in summarizing and paraphrasing; and language related problems like, the lack of knowledge about the academic vocabulary, grammar issues, and punctuation problems. Khairuddin et al (2022) concluded their research with result that the nature of academic writing as a mirror of the student’s critical thinking may be the reason behind the difficulties they face in academic writing. Supporting this idea, Golpour (2014) conducted a research which aims to find the relationship between critical thinking and students’ writing performance and concluded

that the problem facing learners in writing is not the lack of knowledge but their critical thinking abilities.

Conclusion

Academic writing is an essential tool that all students use in their academic journey. It is based on formality, objectivity, clarity, cautious language, documentation, and systematicity. Along the process of research and writing, the students use different sources to support their ideas and include them in their texts through the techniques of quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing with citing the original sources. Academic writing helps students in several ways including improving students' language and research skills. Even though it is one of the characteristics of the successful student, many students face difficulties in academic writing due to the lack of vocabulary, time management, summarizing and paraphrasing, finding suitable sources, and the lack of critical thinking skills.

1.2.Section Two: Critical Thinking



Introduction

Critical thinking plays an important role in people's lives. It drives them to think wisely about the consequences of their actions before taking any choices, and it is a subconscious ability which means that people use it without being aware of it in everyday life. This chapter explores the definition of critical thinking, its importance, and the characteristics of the critical thinkers. Furthermore, it deals with the relationship between critical thinking and academic writing and provides tips for improving academic writing through critical thinking

1.2.1. The Definition of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking was defined in several ways through time. Starting with Robert Ennis (1962) who defined it as "the correct assessing of statements". In other words, the goal of critical thinking is to assess to what extent a certain statement can be considered true or false. In this approach, the critical thinker has to follow a given criterion in evaluating the certainty of the piece of information they receive from others. Later in 1991, Ennis proposed a new definition where he linked critical thinking to self-reflection, rationalism and beliefs. The critical thinkers are the persons who can reflect on their actions and uses evidence in deciding their actions and beliefs. The new definition aimed at incorporating critical thinking in the schools and college study programmes as an independent curriculum.

In other view, Fisher and Scriven (1997) agree that critical thinking is a skill which focuses on both interpretation and evaluation of the content. In this sense, it can be taught and improved through sessions and tips. Paul (1992) stated that critical thinking is the kind of self-guided and controlled thinking. This view shows that the human being can control their critical thinking abilities. Sternberg (1986) considered critical thinking a mental process which is used in creating solutions for problems, making decisions, and gaining knowledge. Finally, Nosich (2012) defined it as the authentic reflective reasonable standard thinking. It is authentic in the sense that it deals with real situations, reflective because the person must reflect on their thinking before taking decision or speaking, reasonable because it seeks for reason rather than emotions, and standards because it adheres to a specific criterion.

1.2.2. Characteristics of the critical thinker

There are number of features that identify the critical thinkers, among which we mention:

Critical thinkers are analytical (Ennis, 1962). When facing a problem, the critical thinker tends to analyse it from different angles and gather as much data as possible and finally find the most appropriate solutions (Moon, J, 2008, as cited in Sabu & Vernandes, 2019). They analyse the arguments and situation before giving any judgment.

Critical thinkers are reasonable (Ennis, 1991). they analyse the issues and draw conclusions without letting their emotions effect their decisions. They are rational in the sense that they tend to use tangible reasons as evidences for their conclusions.

Critical thinkers are attentive (Ennis, 1991). They pay attention to details and have strong observation skills. They seek to gather as much information about their issues as possible. Attention and observation are needed to find the relationship between the elements of the problem, thus finding the possible reasons and solutions for issue.

Critical thinkers are decision makers (Ennis, 1991). They do not fear to fail and ready to take risks with their decisions. If their decisions do not pay off, they can move to other solutions instead of sticking with the wrong ones.

Critical thinkers are self-aware (Ennis, 1991). They consider their decisions and the results that they may lead to at the end. They seek alternatives and prepare second case plans in case things go wrong or in the unexpected direction.

Critical thinkers are able to point the focus (Ennis, 1991). This includes the problem and the reasons. In addition, they have a goal that they want to achieve, so they are focused on reaching their objectives.

Critical thinkers are curious to obtain more knowledge (Ennis, 1991). They try to gather the best they can of information about the situation in order to be able to give value judgments and fair solutions. This can be achieved through reading and attending conferences, lectures and asking experts.

1.2.3. Importance of Critical Thinking

The critical thinking is considered a crucial skill for many reasons. It is an essential teaching tool nowadays (Zafarovna & Qizi, 2024), and a skill that all students should master (Sabu & Vernandes, 2019). It helps in generating arguments and defending them. It also improves learners' analytical skills and reading abilities. According to Negoescu (2023), learners can develop their level in a better way if they can manipulate their thinking. Besides, critical thinking can be used to distinguish facts from opinions, finding evidences for arguments, and presenting opinions, and proved through many studies to be effective in enhancing students' language skills (Ennis, 1991). Critical thinking is a source and reason for gaining wider and deeper knowledge. Although critical thinking stands for systematic rational thinking, it encourages creativity in finding new solutions.

1.2.4. Critical thinking in writing

Critical thinking is a main component in academic writing (Bağçeci & Şenel, 2019). It plays undeniable role in language learning and writing achievement (Golpour, 2014). Its role is represented in the process of generating arguments and defending them. Academic writing and critical thinking share the same process of conceptualization, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Khairuddin et al, 2022). According to Sabu & Vernandes (2019), academic writing and critical thinking are related positively; the higher the critical thinking is, the better academic writing will be. Critical thinking is part of the argumentation process that students use in argumentative essays. In addition, it plays a significant role in the objectivity and rationalism which are an important characteristics of academic writing. The students use their critical thinking in selecting the arguments and sources for their studies and apply it as well in the paraphrasing and summarizing techniques

1.2.5. Tips for Improving Academic Writing Through Critical Thinking

Critical thinking can develop students writing at many levels. At the level of finding sources, it is necessary for the students to be judgmental in selecting the information and to investigate the credibility of the source they use rather than accepting for granted all the sources (Bailey, 2011). The critical thinker can assess the correctness, trustworthiness, and the value of the data (Leedy & Ormard, 2021). At the level of development of ideas, it is significant to

impose arguments rather than describe them (Andrews and Mitchell, 2001, as cited in Tahira & Haider, 2019). This means that the student must show their character in their arguments not only state the arguments provided by others. At the final level which is editing, the critical evaluation and observation help in correcting the language mistakes and the unclear ideas (Leedy & Ormard, 2021). The writer must as well fully understand their work by asking different critical questions about the topic, the arguments, and research tools (Leedy & Ormard, 2021).

Conclusion

Critical thinking is an innate ability that can be developed through understanding of the concept and practice of the reasonable thinking. Critical thinkers have analytical and observational skills and tend to use tangible reasons as evidences for their arguments. It is essential for students to improve their critical thinking skills as it is a tool in communication and proving one's status. As for writing, critical thinking can be used in the argumentative essays as a tool for selecting and organizing arguments.



Chapter 02: Data Collection and Interpretation

Introduction

In this chapter, a brief description of the methodology, the data collection tool, and the sample is provided. After that, it is followed by the analysis of the data and concluded by the results and suggestions for future implementations. This study focused on selecting students views about the role of critical thinking in developing academic writing aspects and the difficulties that might face them in its implementation.

2.1. Research Methodology

The current research adopted a descriptive method that provides an image of students' thoughts and beliefs about the critical thinking, academic writing, and their interrelationship. An online questionnaire was submitted to third year LMD students at the English language department at Kasdi Merbah university- Ouargla, Ouargla, and focused on the impact of critical thinking on the development of students' academic writing.

2.2. The Sample

This study intentionally targeted the third year English language students at the faculty of languages and letters at Kasdi Merbah university- Ouargla. This level allows the students to be familiar with both concepts of critical thinking and academic writing and guarantees for the researcher that the participants have a background knowledge about the topic. The questionnaire was distributed via Facebook and 35 students have answered it. In this sense, the population (i.e. third year LMD students) was purposively selected meanwhile the sample (35 students) was ultimately random.

2.3. Description of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was created via Google forms and submitted to the students via Facebook. It is entitled 'The Role of Critical Thinking in Developing Academic Writing aspects'. It starts with a short introduction that includes the topic, the aim of the study, instructions for answering the questions, and the guarantee of anonymity. The total number of questions is nine including five multiple choice questions, two checkboxes questions, and two open ended questions. The first four questions explore the students' perceptions about the definition and characteristics of academic writing and critical

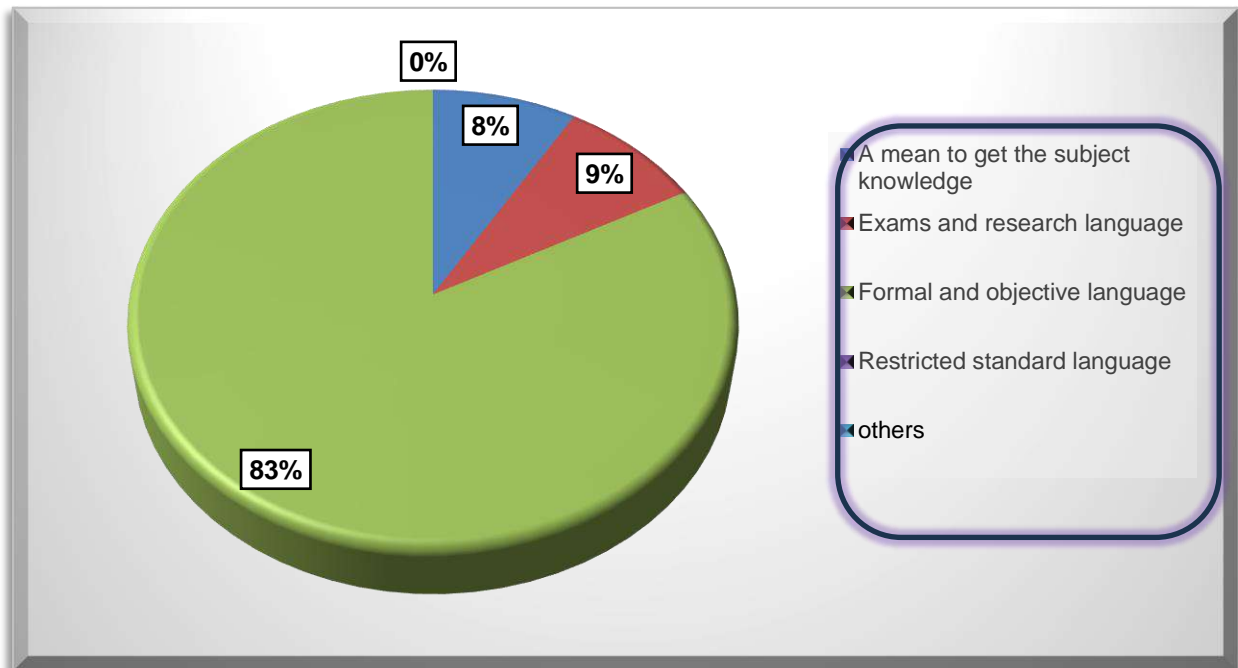
thinking, and followed by three questions that investigate their view about the impact of critical thinking on academic writing. After that, the last two questions are about the implementation of critical thinking in teaching academic writing and the difficulties that students face when implementing it. It is important to mention that the proposed answers for the multiple choice and checkboxes questions were all considered correct because the main aim of the questions was not to examine the students' knowledge about these concepts, but instead they aimed to prompt reflection on their own perceptions of the nature of these concepts.

2.4. The Data Analysis and Interpretation

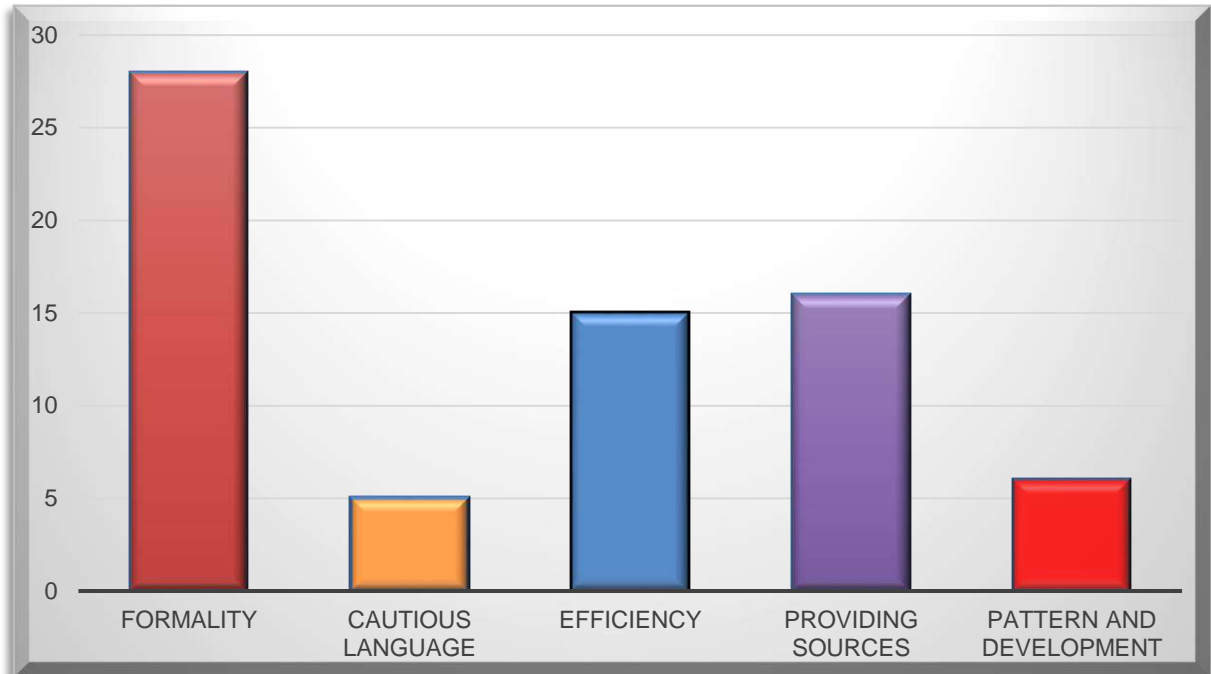
As previously mentioned, the questionnaire consisted of nine questions. Each question aims to delve into students' thoughts and beliefs.

Q.1 What is the most appropriate definition of academic writing?

Since the field of study is academic writing, the first questions targeted the students' understanding of the concept of academic writing. Four answers were proposed in addition to an open-ended choice where students can define academic writing in their own way. The suggested statements included: a mean to get the subject knowledge, exams and research language, formal and objective language, and a restricted standard language. As shown in figure 2-1, the results revealed that the majority of the students (29 students) believe that academic writing is the objective and formal language, representing by that a percentage of 83% of the total answers. Meanwhile, three students (8%) defined it as the mean to get the subject knowledge and other three (8%) chose exams and research language. Surprisingly, no students proposed their own definition. These results reveal that students look at academic writing in the sense of the language used, formality and objectivity, not in the sense of its goal, research and exams language and a mean to get the subject knowledge.

Figure 2-1*Students' Definition of Academic Writing***Q.2- What is the main aspect of academic writing?**

The second question is in the form of checkboxes question where students are free to tick more than one option. In this question, the goal was to determine the students' point of view about the importance of the aspects of academic writing. This included the five main aspects of academic writing which are formality, cautious language, efficiency, providing sources, and pattern and development. According to figure 2-2, The formality was in the lead with 80%, followed by providing sources with 45.7%, efficiency with 42.9%, pattern and development with 17.1%, and in the last place cautious language with 14.3%. This proves again that students are focused on the academic writing as language and formality of words more than the academic writing as a process itself. The reason behind this might be the teachers' focus on this aspect. Providing sources is a key element in academic writing and many students have chosen it among the main aspects of academic writing. Meanwhile, pattern and development was the before-last pick despite its importance in deciding the format of the text.

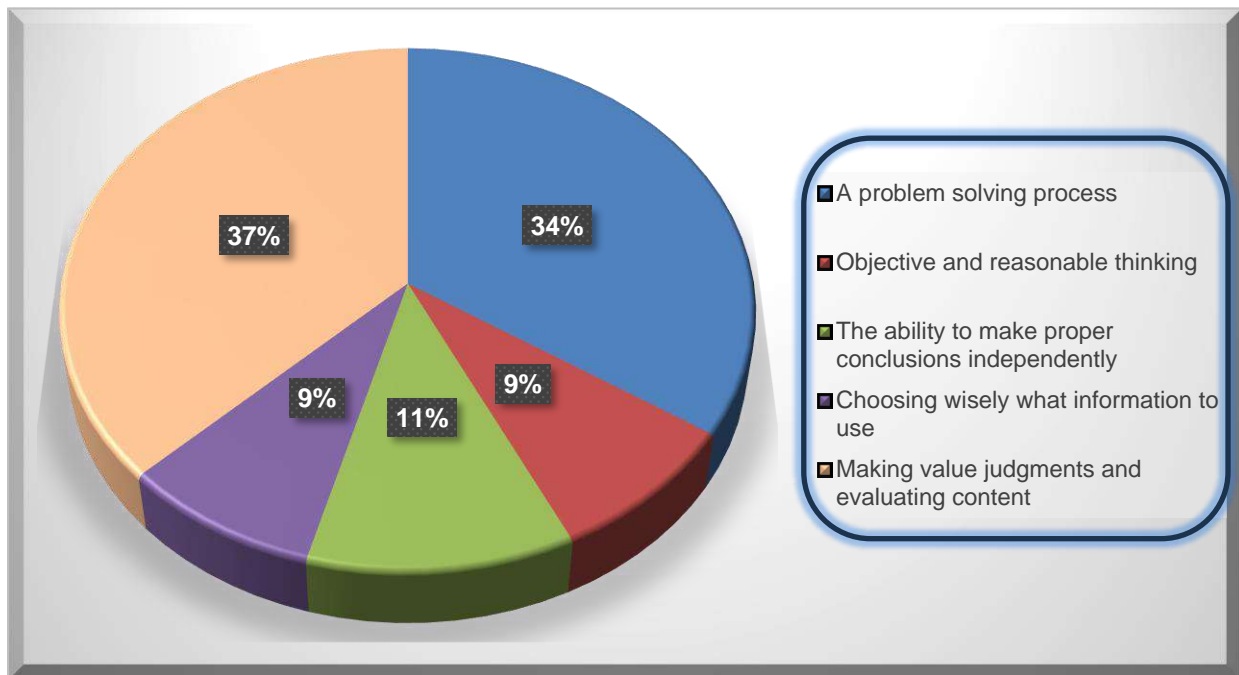
Figure 2-2*The Students' Perceptions About the Main Aspects of Academic Writing***Q.3- What is critical thinking?**

After dealing with the field of study, the next two questions investigate the participants' viewpoint about the topic of the study. This includes first the definition of critical thinking which represents a challenge for the students because there is no one definition of it and allows for variance in answers. Five different definitions were provided to students and they had the choice to select only one among them. The options involved a problem solving process, objective and reasonable thinking, the ability to make proper conclusions independently, choosing wisely what information to use, and making value judgments and evaluating content. Unlike the previous questions, the results presented in figure 2-3 were close and varied among students which showed the complexity of the term. 'Making value judgments and evaluating content' was selected by 13 students representing 37% of the total answers which is the highest percentage. Meanwhile, 'a problem solving process' was in second place with 34%, and it was selected by 12 students. Four students (11%) picked 'the ability to make proper conclusions independently'. Lastly, 'objective and reasonable thinking' and 'choosing wisely what information to use' were each picked by three students (9%). The variance

in answers and close results reveals that critical thinking is wide open term that allows for many definitions. The students' answers reflect their thinking and their vision of the critical thinker.

Figure 2-3

The Students' Definition of Critical Thinking



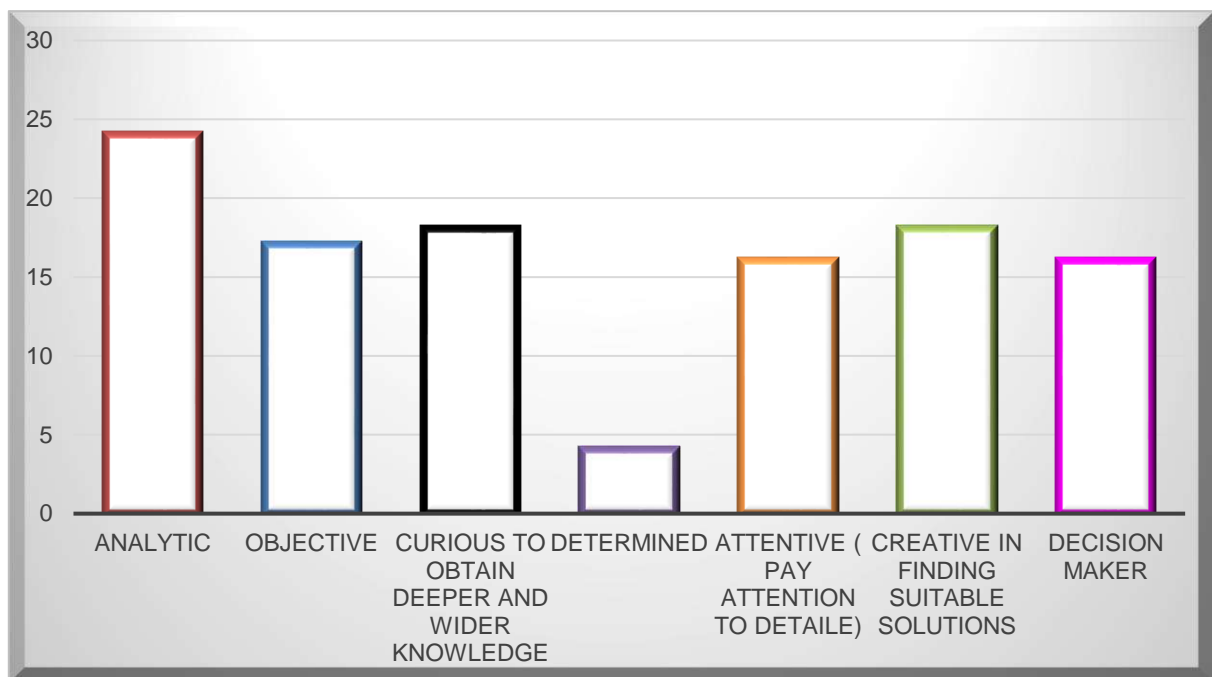
Q.4- What are the main characteristics of the critical thinker?

Another checkboxes question where students are asked to tick the answers they believe to be true. In this question, the students are given a set of characteristics of the critical thinkers and asked to tick the ones they believe to be the main characteristics. The aim behind this question is to uncover the students' vision of the critical thinker. Seven choices were provided without including the options 'none of them' or 'all of them' to ensure that students would not use these options to escape answering in addition that all the answers are considered correct because the aim again is not to examine their knowledge but to explore their view. According to figure 2-4, 24 students ticked 'analytic' as a main feature of critical thinking representing by that 68.6%. 18 students (51.4%) ticked 'Curious to obtain deeper and wider knowledge' and 'Creative in finding suitable solutions', and 17 students (48.6%) clicked on objective. 'Attentive (pay attention to details)' and 'Decision maker' were each ticked by 16 students presenting 45.7% while 'determined' was in last place with only 11.4%. These results reveal that students look at

the critical thinker as a person who can analyse the problems in first place, seek knowledge and creativity in second place, and show objectivity in taking decisions. However, few students think that determination is part of critical thinking.

Figure 2-4

The Main Characteristics of the Critical Thinker According to Students



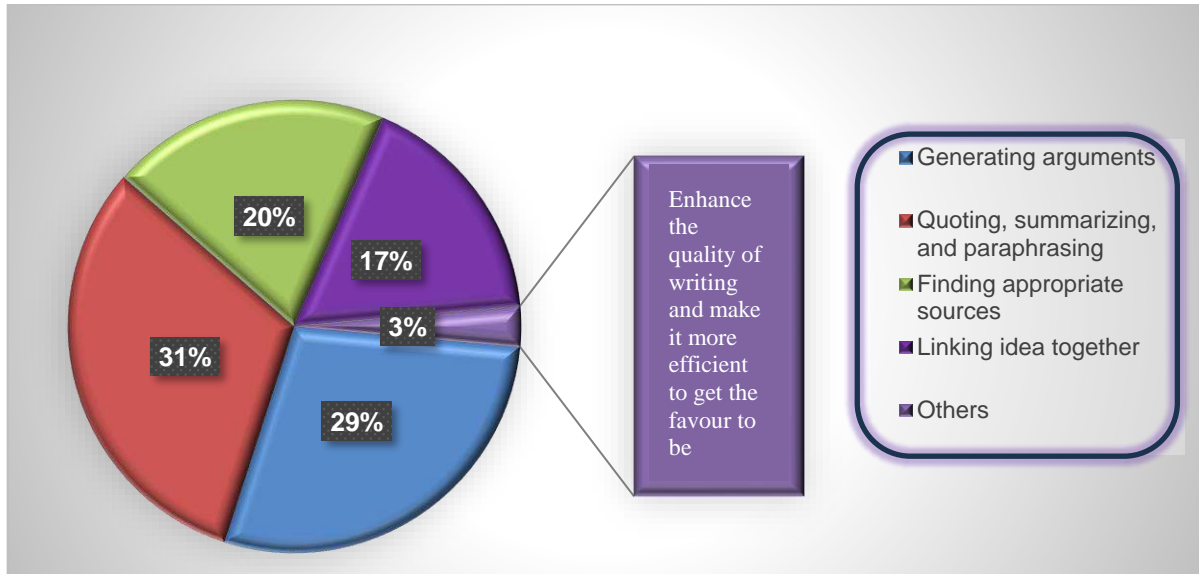
Q.5- What role can critical thinking play in academic writing?

The following three questions target the research problem. The first question was in the form of a multiple choices question where students were given four options on how critical thinking may develop academic writing including, ‘generating arguments’, ‘quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing’, ‘finding appropriate sources’, and ‘linking ideas together’ in addition to ‘others’ option to allow students to answer in their own way. The figure 2-5 shows that the results were very close with ‘quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing’ selected by 11 students representing 31%, ‘generating arguments’ picked by 10 persons representing 29%, ‘finding appropriate sources’ selected by 7 persons representing 20%, and ‘linking ideas together’ picked by 6 persons representing 17%. A student preferred to use their own words, and their answer was ‘enhance the quality of writing and make it more efficient to get the favour to be adopted’. This shows that most students look at the critical thinking as an analysis tool that is used in the process of restating others’ works and producing one’s own ideas and arguments. Meanwhile, others

think of it as a searching tool to select the appropriate references in writing, or as a coherence- maintaining tool to link ideas together. Furthermore, the student with the 'others' answer believes that critical thinking helps writers be unique in their writing style to the extent that drives other writers to use their works as references in their studies.

Figure 2-5

Students' Opinions About the Role of Critical Thinking in Academic Writing



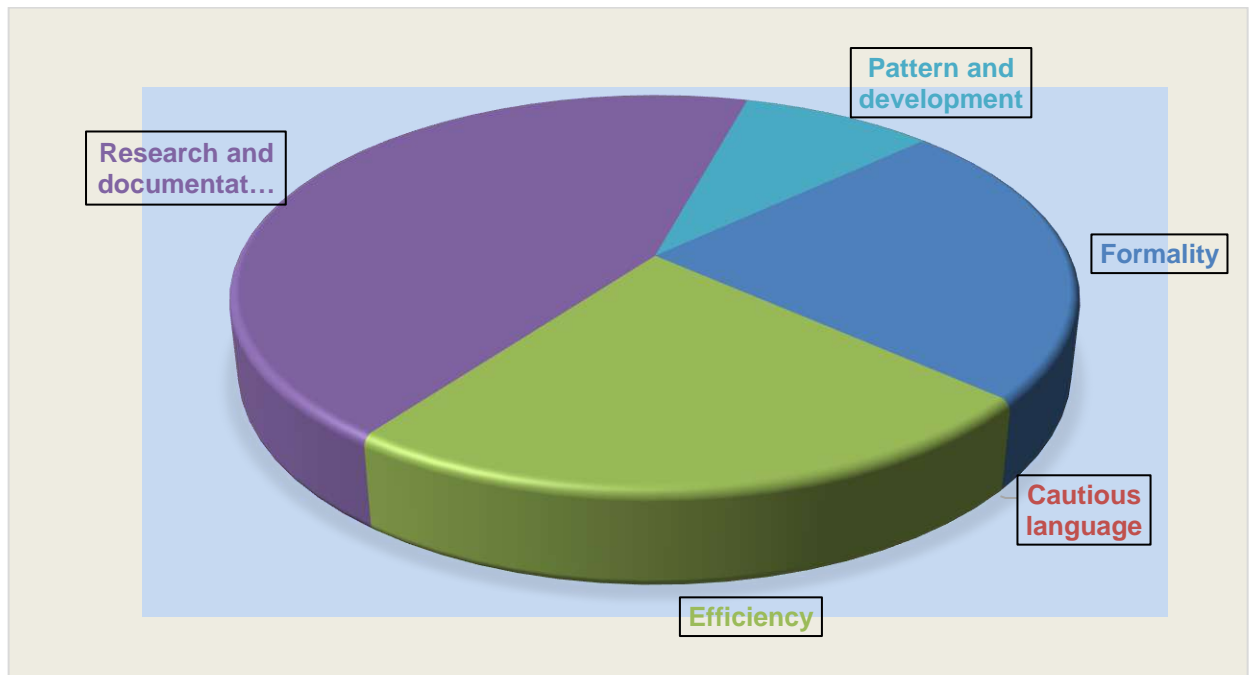
Q.6- What aspect of academic writing can critical thinking develop?

In the second questions that is concerned with the research problem, the students were asked to select the specific aspect of academic writing that critical thinking can develop and affect the most. Most of the students (15 students presenting 42.9%) chose the aspect of 'research and documentation', followed by 8 students (22.9%) who chose the 'efficiency', 8 students (22.9%) chose 'formality', 4 students (9%) chose 'pattern and development', and no student (0%) chose 'cautious language'.

These answers prove again that students view critical thinking as an analysis and searching tool thus it impacts the aspect of research and documentation more than any other aspect. Meanwhile other students saw that it can develop the writing at the language level through making it more formal and efficient.

Figure 2-6

The Impact of Critical Thinking on the Aspects of Academic Writing According to Students



Q.7- How can critical thinking develop this aspect?

After answering the previous question, the students had to elaborate their answers through mentioning the ways critical thinking can develop the selected aspect. Some students showed misunderstanding of the question in their answers and provided unrelated answers. In this analysis, the overall summary of answers is provided for each aspect

1. Formality.

Critical thinking can develop this aspect by the writer's awareness of what to write and its impact on the reader. It also helps in developing the way the writer expresses and organizes their ideas and arguments in the text, and it enhances their focus on the coherence and precision of the language. Other students mentioned that it can develop the degree of the language formality, evaluating of the writer's own work, and considering the other writers' point of view about their text. Finally, critical thinking can develop the text formality through paying attention to the language used in the text and correcting any possible mistakes in it.

2. Efficiency.

The critical thinker can develop the efficiency of their piece of writing through eliminating the less valuable content and focusing on the valuable content. Furthermore, critical thinking helps the writers in efficiently treating the topic and respecting the norms of academic writing. Eliminating the redundancy in the text is a key feature of academic writing so the critical thinker pays attention and reads their writing more than once to ensure that there is no redundancy in their texts. Last, the critical thinkers write as much as needed only and focus on providing the appropriate arguments to their topic.

3. Research and Documentation.

Critical thinking aids in analysing and evaluating information. Therefore, it allows the students to grasp the main ideas of research and documentation effectively. Students mentioned that critical thinking teaches them to critically evaluate sources, analyse information, and make informed decisions about citing the source they used in their writing. They also highlighted the importance of critical thinking in developing argumentation and analytical skills which are crucial for academic writing. In addition, Critical thinking facilitates paraphrasing and summarizing information from various sources, so it helps students use external knowledge in their writing while avoiding plagiarism. They emphasized the significance of citing sources properly to acknowledge the work used in their writing for ensuring academic integrity. Critical thinking encourages seeking information from different sources. Hence, it is used as a tool for enriching the quality and depth of their research. Students noted that critical thinking pushes researchers to be creative and provide valuable information in their documents and research that helps in enhancing the overall quality of their work. They mentioned also that using critical thinking leads to significant advancements in research projects, resulting in extensive knowledge that can be shared with others.

4. Pattern and Development.

critical thinking can develop this aspect through helping students to recognize the common patterns of the texts and respecting their norms. The form of the text should mirror its type and lead the reader to understand it. In addition to the form, the development of the ideas and the link between them is important in evaluating any kind of writing.

Q.8- Do you agree that critical thinking should be taught at universities to develop students' writing level?

Moving to the questions about future implementations, the students were asked whether they agree that the critical thinking should be taught at universities to develop students' academic writing. 28 students representing 80% of the votes selected 'strongly agree' and 'agree' meanwhile 2 students selected to go with 'neutral' meaning that they do not belong to any of the sides, and the last five students chose that they disagree on teaching critical thinking. These results show that students are aware of the importance of critical thinking and they support the idea of implementing it in the University curriculum.

Q.9- What difficulties do students face when implementing critical thinking in academic writing?

The last question was about the difficulties that face students in implementing the critical thinking in academic writing. The answers of the students varied in different aspects.

Language Related Problems.

Some of the students stated that they had difficulty in choosing the appropriate words and understanding the academic terms. Meanwhile, others suffered from the spelling mistakes. Another student said that the structure of the essay creates an issue for them.

Argumentation Problems.

Generating and defending arguments is something that many students suffer from in the academic writing. Whether these arguments are self-generated or taken from other sources, students seem to find difficulty in expressing and defending them in a suitable academic language.

Sources Related Problems.

Many students mentioned sources as an obstacle in academic writing. This includes selecting sources, evaluating sources, understanding the content of the sources, paraphrasing or summarizing the content of the sources, and citing the sources.

Psychological Problems.

Few students mentioned that the reasons behind students lack of critical thinking is purely emotional. They listed some of the psychological problems that may encounter students including the lack of interest, stress, fear, and the misunderstanding of the topic.

Summary of the Results

The analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire reveal number of findings about the students' perceptions. First, the students look at academic writing as a formal and objective language that is based on the formality of vocabulary and the use of academic terminology. Meanwhile, their perception of critical thinking and its characteristics showed a huge variance among students. Second, the students view the role of critical thinking as a research and analysis tool in academic writing through reviewing the literature and selecting the appropriate sources. Last, the students encourage teaching critical thinking in universities to face the difficulties that face them in academic writing.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the data was analysed and interpreted and the main finding were discussed. The selected methodology and data collection tool revealed that students perceived the role of critical thinking in developing their academic writing in different ways, but the majority think that it helps in developing the aspect of research and documentation and enhances the students' abilities in selecting, analysing, evaluating, and citing the information from the different sources.



General Conclusion

This study explored the students' perceptions about the role of critical thinking in developing academic writing aspects including their perceptions about the nature of the proposed concepts, their interrelationship, and the difficulties that face them in implementing critical thinking in their writing. It targeted third year English language students at Kasdi Merbah university- Ouargla in the academic year 2023-2024. It adopted a descriptive method through providing students with questionnaire, and they were asked to answer the questions as honestly as possible.

The dissertation was divided into two parts including a theoretical frameworks that is concerned with presenting the concepts of the study according to different sources and a practical part in which the data was presented and interpreted.

Academic writing can be defined in several ways. In terms of the language, it is the formal and objective language that adheres to a number of rules. It can be also seen as a process that follows systematic patterns. It is mostly used in universities and schools, and it is characterized by the formality, objectivity, research and documentation, systematicity, clarity, and cautious language. Academic writing makes use of many techniques including quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing. It is important because it is considered a tool for sharing ideas and gaining knowledge in addition to it being a key criteria in evaluating students' levels. Despite its importance, the students face difficulties in fulfilling its requirements due to the lack of competence in formal language, spelling mistakes, formatting issues and some psychological problems including stress and Fear.

There is no exact definition of critical thinking because of its complexity. Many researchers tried to propose definitions for this term. Some defined it as an assessing tool while others defined it as a judging tool, or searching tool. The critical thinker is analytical, objective, curious to obtain deeper knowledge, attentive, decision maker, self-aware, and focused. Critical thinking helps in generating arguments, distinguishing facts from opinions, presenting opinions, and developing students language skills. It also plays an important role in writing through generating ideas and arguments, developing writing level, and enhancing the sense of objectivity and rationalism in selecting information.

Moving to the data collection and interpretation, the questionnaire was submitted to the students via Facebook page, and 35 students answered the questionnaire. The findings revealed that 83% of students view academic writing as the formal and objective language. Meanwhile 37% of the students defined critical thinking as a mean of judging

and evaluating content, and 34% defined it as problem solving process. 68.6% of the students think that the main characteristic of the critical thinkers is their analytical ability. When asked about the role of critical thinking in academic writing, the majority selected research and documentation through reviewing literature and evaluating the content and trustworthiness of the sources. 80% of the students supported the idea of teaching critical thinking at universities.

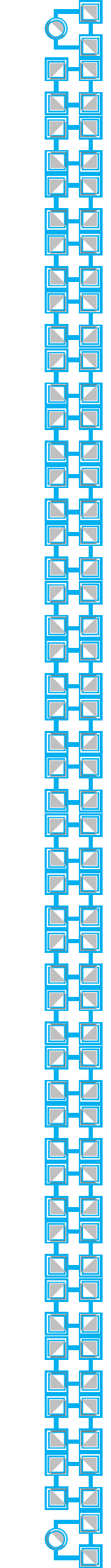
The study faced some limitations including the fact that it is a case study in which the results cannot be generalized. In addition, the sample size represented in 35 students who answered the questionnaire is small.

The findings of the present study can be used as a data for future studies. They also help in diagnosing the students' weakness in writing and finding possible solutions to make writing easier for students. On the base of the dataset of this research, critical thinking may be taught at universities.

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Appendices

The Role of Critical Thinking in Developing Academic Writing

The aim of this questionnaire is to explore students' perceptions about the role of critical thinking in developing academic writing. You are humbly asked to answer the following questions as honestly as possible and in the way that reflects your own thinking and beliefs. Your answers will be used for research purposes only and therefore will remain anonymous.

* Indicates required question

1. What is the most appropriate definition of academic writing? *

Mark only one oval.

- A mean to get the subject knowledge
- Exams and research language
- Formal and objective language
- Restricted standard language
- Other: _____

2. What is the main aspect of academic writing? (you can choose more than one) *

Tick all that apply.

- Formality
- Cautious language
- Efficiency
- Providing sources
- Pattern and development

3. *What is critical thinking? **

Mark only one oval.

- Problem solving process
- Objective and reasonable thinking
- The ability to make proper conclusions independently
- Choosing wisely what information to use
- Making value judgments and evaluating content

4. *What are the main characteristics of the critical thinker? (you can choose more than one) **

Tick all that apply.

- Analytic
- Objective
- Curious to obtain deeper and wider knowledge
- Determined
- Attentive (pay attention to details)
- Creative in finding suitable solutions
- Decision maker

5. *What role can critical thinking play in academic writing? *Mark only one oval*

- Generating arguments
- Quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing
- Finding appropriate sources
- Linking ideas together
- Other: _____

6. *What aspect of academic writing can critical thinking develop? **

Mark only one oval.

- Formality
- Cautious language
- Efficiency
- Research and documentation
- Pattern and development

7. *How can critical thinking develop this aspect? **

8. *Do you agree that critical thinking should be taught at universities to develop students' writing level? **

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

9. *What difficulties do students face when implementing critical thinking in academic writing? **

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الملخص

قد أثبتت العديد من الدراسات الدور الفعال للتفكير النقدي في تنمية مهارة الكتابة الأكاديمية للطلبة. هدفت الدراسة الراهنة إلى استطلاع تصورات طلبة حول مفهومي الكتابة الأكاديمية والتفكير النقدي وخصائصهما ودور الأخير في تطوير أوجه الكتابة الأكاديمية لطلبة اللغة الإنجليزية. اعتمدت الدراسة منهجا وصفيا من خلال نشر استبيان في صفحة الفيسبوك لطلبة السنة الثالثة لغة انجليزية في جامعة قاصدي مرباح ورقلة للسنة الدراسية 2023-2024. وقد قام 35 طالبا بالمشاركة في الدراسة من خلال الإجابة على الاستبيان. أظهرت النتائج ان 83 بالمئة من الطلبة ينظرون الى الكتابة الأكاديمية على انها اللغة التي تلتزم بالموضوعية والرسمية بينما أظهر تعريفهم للتفكير النقدي اختلافا واسعا في الآراء بين الذي يعرفه كأداة لنقد وتقييم المحتوى (37 بالمئة) ومن يعرفه كأداة لحل المشاكل (34 بالمئة) حيث يستند بالدرجة الأولى، حسب رأيهم، على المقدرة على تحليل المشكلة وجمع أكبر قدر من المعلومات عن الموضوع. ومن جهة أخرى فان 44 بالمئة من الطلبة قد اوضحوا ان دور التفكير النقدي في الكتابة الأكاديمية متمركز على البحث عن المعلومات من مختلف المصادر وتقييم محتواها ومصداقيتها وكذا القدرة على تهميش هذه المصادر، بمعنى توثيقها، بالشكل الصحيح وفق المعايير المتبعة لذلك. إضافة الى ذلك فقد عبر 80 بالمئة من الطلبة دعمهم لفكرة تدريس التفكير النقدي في الجامعات. يمكن استخدام نتائج هذه الدراسة كوسيلة لإبراز نقاط ضعف الطلبة وإيجاد حلول لها وكذا لتدريس التفكير النقدي في الجامعات لتطوير مهارات الكتابة الأكاديمية للطلبة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكتابة الأكاديمية، التفكير النقدي، تصورات الطلبة، أوجه الكتابة الأكاديمية.

Résumé

De nombreuses études ont mis en évidence le rôle efficace de la pensée critique dans le développement de la rédaction académique des étudiants. Cette étude visait à explorer les perceptions des étudiants au sujet des concepts de pensée critique, de la rédaction académique, de leurs caractéristiques et du rôle de cette dernière dans le développement des aspects de la rédaction académique des étudiants de l'anglais comme langue étrangère. L'étude a adopté une méthode descriptive dans laquelle un questionnaire a été soumis aux étudiants de langue anglaise de troisième année à l'université Kasdi Merbah- Ouargla au cours de l'année académique 2023-2024. 35 étudiants ont participé à l'étude en répondant au questionnaire. Les résultats ont révélé que 83% des étudiants considèrent l'écriture académique comme le langage formel et objectif. Pendant ce temps, il y avait une grande variance dans leurs définitions de la pensée critique. 37% des étudiants considèrent que c'est un outil de jugement et d'évaluation du contenu, et 34% le considèrent comme un processus de résolution de problèmes basé, à leur avis, sur l'analyse du problème et la collecte d'informations suffisantes. D'autre part, 44% des étudiants pensent que la pensée critique peut développer l'aspect de la recherche et de la documentation dans la rédaction académique en examinant différentes sources, en évaluant leur contenu et leur fiabilité et en citant les sources de manière appropriée. En outre, la majorité des étudiants (80%) ont soutenu l'idée d'enseigner la pensée critique dans les universités. Les résultats de cette recherche peuvent être utilisés pour identifier les faiblesses des étudiants et trouver des solutions pour les surmonter, et comme un ensemble de données pour mettre en œuvre la pensée critique dans le programme d'études universitaires pour développer la rédaction académique des étudiants.

Les mots clé : rédaction académique, la pensée critique, les perceptions des étudiants, des aspects de la rédaction académique.