



Writing Difficulties among First-Year Arabic L1 University Students: Diagnosing Challenges and Proposing Targeted Interventions

Jasmina Mirtoska

University of Vienna , Austria

Abstract

This study investigates the predominant writing difficulties experienced by first-year university students at the American University of the Middle East (AUM) in Kuwait, whose first language (L1) is Arabic. The research identifies key challenges such as L1 interference manifesting in issues of organization, repetition, literal translation, and limited critical thinking in academic writing. These obstacles hinder students' ability to produce coherent, cohesive, and well-structured texts in English, their target academic language. To address these challenges, the study proposes a series of pedagogical strategies designed to mitigate L1 interference and enhance writing proficiency. These include brainstorming and discussion activities to stimulate idea generation, outlining ideas in note form to improve organization, planning through guided questioning to encourage critical thinking, drafting with iterative revisions, devising checklists to ensure writing quality, and incorporating peer review and feedback mechanisms that provide constructive criticism. The implementation of these targeted interventions aims to support L1 Arabic speakers in overcoming transfer-related difficulties, thereby fostering clearer, more effective academic writing skills.

Keywords: writing challenges; English language learning; Arab L1 university students; academic writing.