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Research Paper

## Effect of Performance Assessment on Iraqi EFL Learners' Writing Competence Motivation for Writing

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### Abstract

This study investigates the impact of performance assessment on the writing competence and motivation for writing among Iraqi EFL learners. In light of the limitations of traditional assessment methods, which often fail to accurately reflect students' abilities and can induce anxiety, this research explores the effectiveness of performance-based assessments as a more engaging and authentic alternative. A total of 41 intermediate-level students from an Iraqi university participated in the study, divided into an experimental group that engaged in performance assessments through dialogue journals and a control group that followed traditional writing tasks. Pre-tests and post-tests were administered to evaluate writing competence, alongside an Academic Writing Motivation Questionnaire to assess changes in motivation levels. The results indicated that performance assessment significantly enhanced both writing proficiency and motivation for writing among the experimental group compared to the control group. This study underscores the importance of innovative assessment strategies in fostering a more effective and motivating learning environment for EFL learners.

**Keywords:** Performance Assessment; Writing Competence; Writing Motivation; Writing Proficiency

### تأثیر ارزیابی عملکرد بر مهارت نوشتاری و انگیزه نوشتن در میان زبان‌آموزان عراقی زبان انگلیسی

این پژوهش به بررسی تأثیر ارزیابی عملکرد بر مهارت نوشتاری و انگیزه نوشتن در میان زبان‌آموزان عراقی زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی می‌پردازد. با توجه به محدودیت‌های روش‌های ارزیابی سنتی که اغلب به درستی توانایی‌های دانش‌آموزان را منعکس نمی‌کنند و می‌توانند موجب اضطراب شوند، این پژوهش به اثربخشی ارزیابی‌های مبتنی بر عملکرد به عنوان جایگزینی جذاب و اصیل‌تر می‌پردازد. تعداد ۴۱ دانشجوی سطح متوسط از یک دانشگاه عراقی در این پژوهش شرکت داشتند که به دو گروه تجربی و کنترل تقسیم شدند؛ گروه تجربی از ارزیابی عملکرد از طریق مجلات گفتگو استفاده کردند و گروه کنترل از روش‌های سنتی نوشتاری بهره بردند. پیش‌آزمون و پس‌آزمون‌هایی برای ارزیابی مهارت نوشتاری و پرسشنامه‌ای برای سنجش تغییرات انگیزه نوشتاری انجام شد. نتایج نشان داد که ارزیابی عملکرد به طور قابل توجهی هم مهارت نوشتاری و هم انگیزه نوشتن را در گروه تجربی نسبت به گروه کنترل بهبود بخشید. این پژوهش بر اهمیت استراتژی‌های ارزیابی نوآورانه در ایجاد محیط یادگیری مؤثرتر و انگیزه‌بخش‌تر برای زبان‌آموزان زبان خارجی تأکید دارد.

**واژگان کلیدی:** ارزیابی عملکرد، مهارت نوشتاری، انگیزه نوشتن، توانایی نوشتاری

## Introduction

In today's interconnected and highly complicated world, English language is taken as the predominant language of international commerce and education which is the driving force of many education departments all around the world to work hard in order to improve English language learning in their schools and institutes (Glisan, Uribe & Adair-Hauck, 2007). However, it should not be neglected that according to many educational methodology, teaching and assessment go hand in hand and teaching cannot be truly effective if it is not directly connected to effective assessment as well. In other words, different scholars such as Colley (2008), Pinter (2009) and Rixon (2000) highlight the importance of the applied assessment technique stating that wrongly selected assessment tasks can severely affect and damage the endeavoring and hard work of the teacher to create efficient and supportive classrooms; consequently, educational administrative and school officials are looking for innovative assessment tools and techniques which are able to connect assessment with teaching and as a result strengthen instruction, provide feedback to learners, and improve students' knowledge and skills.

In the same vein, Colley (2008) also believes that for many years, teachers have used and relied on the results of standardized tests to evaluate students and their performances. On the other hand, according to Speers (2008) research shows that these standardized types of assessments are not always that much successful in demonstrating and evaluating what students really know. The so-called traditional assessments such as pencil-and-paper tests are usually reductionist and as was mentioned above, do not measure fully the extent to which students have achieved a thorough understanding of a topic or whether they have mastered complex skills like critical thinking or problem solving (Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Volante, 2004; Herrera, Morales & Murry, 2013). Criticizing the in efficiency of traditional assessment procedure, Bejarano and Gordon (2009) asserts that traditional evaluations do not provide any information about the changes that teachers have to make in their classes in order to improve instruction or help unsuccessful students.

Based on the results of several studies (Bejarano & Gordon, 2009; Hasselgreen, 2005; Taylor, 2006), it can be concluded that these standardized traditional evaluation techniques and tests cause high levels of anxiety which in turn plunges the students into an educational system in which they lose their interest in language learning. Hence, it necessitates the implementation of a new assessment strategy that takes into consideration students' cognitive development, a strategy that emphasizes what learners can do than what they cannot do, a strategy that can function as an effective tool to diagnose learning and teaching problems by focusing on students' gradual and continuous improvement of learning not just their ultimate status (Bejarano & Gordon, 2009). Therefore, advanced educators are trying to find effective assessment tools that move further and go beyond paper-and-pencil formats in order to enable teachers to evaluate their students appropriately.

Taking all the pitfalls of the traditional standardized evaluation strategies and all the requirements, Glisan, Uribe and Adair-Hauck (2007) suggest that performance-based assessments are among the most appropriate and effective evaluation strategies to be used with English as Foreign Language (EFL) students. Stiggins (2001) believes that performance-based assessments possess strategies that require students to use their knowledge and skills to create a product or perform a task that is authentic and meaningful to them based on certain predetermined criteria. Performance assessment requires students to demonstrate that they have mastered specific skills and competencies by performing or producing something. Advocates of performance assessment call for assessment of following kind: designing and carrying out experiments, writing essays which requires students to rethink, to integrate or to apply information, writing term papers, critiques poems or short stories, giving speeches, playing musical instruments, participating in

oral examinations, developing portfolios, developing athletic skills or routines (Braden, Schroeder & Buckley, 2001).

One of the major skills that can be assessed through performance assessment is the writing skill which is believed to be a complicated skill by Ashwell (2000). The main reason for this claim is the perceptions that the reader develops because different people have different understandings about what they read. Hence, it can be concluded that a writing task is so difficult and complex since the writer has to take various factors related to the writing process such as social context arrangements into consideration because these factors greatly vary in various societies. This enormous load of factors puts the writers at the center of the attention. Writers usually undergo a vast responsibility writing a piece since they should figure out all the elements of feedback from the side of the readers, the text itself, the discourse, and the reality altogether (Ashwell, 2000). Birjandi and Tamjid (2011) assert that writers must adopt, develop, and use various strategies to be able to progress in this process such as going through the stages of planning, drafting, and revising.

Despite the huge effort of Iraqi EFL learners for learning a second language as perfect as possible, still their inability to write precisely and to convey their messages as crystal as possible makes them overwhelmed (Nasser, 2018). Writing as one the four essential skills of learning a new language is affected by so many factors like cultural, sociolinguistic and most importantly the knowledge of how to write and what to write. Writing as a form of human communication, is formed by means of a set of visible marks that are related, by convention, to some particular structural level of language. This definition highlights the fact that writing is the principal representation of language rather than a direct representation of thought. While language learners do not accomplish their desired target band and result due to their weaknesses in writing skill they lost their self-confidence, self-esteem and motivation to write. Performance assessment will give the learners the opportunity of being seen in the class atmosphere, to engage with in a real interaction with other students since they perform what they already have in their competence cache (Dunlosky, Rawson, Marsh, Nathan, & Willingham, 2013).

Learning an EFL /L2 in a classroom setting is bound to different factors on both the learners and their teachers' sides and requires more than sitting in a well-managed classroom and listening to a well-planned lesson (Stefanou & Parkes, 2003). Among these factors is the motivation that every learner needs to a certain degree to be able to reach the goals set for learning the language. If motivation is not maintained, learners may feel that they are not capable of learning the language (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). The type of motivation addressed in this paper is related to the accomplishing a writing task. Dörnyei (2014) points out the importance of teachers' role in enhancing learners' motivation stating that teachers should prepare materials, activities, and appropriate types of assessment that will arouse the learners' curiosity and interests and encourage them to learn an L2 for its own sake.

One way of enhancing students' motivation and engagement to write is to provide opportunities for them to engage at a more meaningful level with the language through refocusing their writing classes to make them relevant to their social and cultural context as well as designing writing tasks which have meaning and interest to them and offer opportunities for social interaction and self-expression. On the other hand, Xu (2008) discovered that students held no intrinsic interest in what was being written and considered it as homework. Similarly, most of EFL learners regard writing as drills in which they list correct sentences that they have memorized from books or articles. Rather than gaining fun from it, most of them feel bored of writing. Their attitudes would definitely affect their English writing quality. Therefore, they need an opportunity to freely express their feelings and opinions to empower them to gain the ownership of their writing. Besides, traditional writing assessments are often too disheartening

and may not only place students under pressure but also fail to develop their interest in writing (Wu, 2004).

Considering the importance of the writing task the main purpose of this study is to find the probable effects that performance assessment can have on Iraqi language learners' writing competence and also their motivation for writing different kind of writing tasks.

The following question were addressed and investigated in this study:

**RQ1:** *Does Performance assessment have any effect upon Iraqi EFL learner's writing competence?*

**RQ2:** *Does Performance assessment have any effect upon Iraqi EFL learner's motivation for writing?*

### Literature Review

Assessment based on performance as a type of authentic assessments is not a new concept in education. In fact, as Colley (2008) asserts, performance-based assessment is one of the oldest methods used to evaluate how well a student has mastered the material that has been presented in class. Likewise, Speers (2008) claims that performance-based assessment nowadays is used as a technique to enable teachers provide their students to demonstrate their real learning and understanding by performing tasks or creating products. VanTassel-Baska (2013) explains the efficacy of performance-based assessment in showing students' real and deep learning since it requires them to use higher-order thinking skills like analysis, synthesis, problem solving, and critical thinking in order to create the responses or perform the tasks.

Tsagari (2004) relate the popularity of this type of assessment among many educators to the capability of performance-based assessments to include meaningful, challenging, and engaging tasks that simulate real-world contexts, and combine language abilities with knowledge and skills of different content-areas. Similarly, Glisan, Uribe, and Adair-Hauck (2007) believe that performance-based assessment evaluates not only the final result of the performance but also it evaluates the procedures and strategies used to obtain that outcome. Using the second benefit of this type of assessment, students' understanding and reasoning are tested to determine how well they can apply what they know (Glisan et al., 2007). It can be concluded that performance-based assessments provide invaluable information about students' knowledge and skills .

Advocates of performance assessment define the philosophy behind performance-based assessment to be its ability to enable students discover knowledge for themselves rather than receive knowledge from the teacher (Herrera, Cabral & Murry, 2013). Also, Herrera, Cabral and Murry (2013) contrast performance-based assessments with old traditional assessment practices by stating that in performance-based assessments, feedback is considered an important tool to improve student learning and teacher instruction. Actually, as William and Thompson (2007) mention, "performance-based assessments give teachers and students an implicit and explicit recipe to improve future action" (p. 12).

The essence of performance assessment can also be sought in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of human learning describes learning as a social process and the origination of human intelligence in society or culture. The major theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Vygotsky believed everything is learned on two levels. First, through interaction with others, and then integrated into the individual's mental structure. As asserts, in Vygotsky's theory, social interaction is of high significance since learners construct the new language during learning process through socially mediated communication (Wang, 2009).

Lightbown and Spada (2006) support the effectiveness of performance-based assessment suggesting that students are engaged in socially interactive activities to encourage them to

communicate and express their intentions, thoughts, and opinions actively. Hence, this is another theoretical foundation for performance-based assessment since it evaluates students' communicative skills in real-world socially interactive contexts .

### **Writing Assessment**

The very skill which was aimed at this study to be investigated using performance-based assessment is writing ability. In dealing with the problems students have with writing and the written expressions, assessment of writing plays a central role for the teachers and the improvement of students. Assessing writing in general is realized through two approaches namely, objective and subjective assessment.

Alamargot and Chanquoy (2001) introduce objective assessment of writing as an indirect approach which focuses on separate sub-skills in writing. This type of writing testing evaluates mainly technicalities and is mostly employed in testing beginners. Indirect testing of writing ability is not capable of enabling the tester to make inferences on the learners' ability to produce language while direct tasks for measuring written performance require language production (Kroutil, Vorburger, Aldworth, & Colliver, (2010). According to Kroutil, et al. (2010) direct tests are most frequently open-ended controlled test, in which learners produce texts on a given topic in a clearly defined situation for a particular audience. Performing such guided writing tasks require the learners to use their communicative ability in real-life writing.

The marking of such tasks is considered subjective, since raters make judgments while assessing the writing script. Accordingly, the assessment should be authentic which means that the context should resemble real-life language use in each aspect of evaluation. Similarly, as writing is a productive skill, the task should resemble real language use, and the assessment has to reflect authenticity (Leung & Lewkowicz, 2006). However, methods of the traditional assessment do not consider the difficulties the students usually encounter in one hand and the management of intervention strategies on the other. Adas and Bakir (2013) pointed out that in spite of the fact that the strategies and processes of writing skill were in the focus of the many researches, the process of writing is not connected to the assessment and remediation by most of them.

## **Methodology**

### **Design of the Study**

The study employed a quasi-experimental design involving two intact classes of sophomore students from the Department of English at an Iraqi university. A total of 60 students were initially assessed using the Preliminary English Test (PET) to ensure homogeneity in language proficiency. From this pool, 41 students were selected and randomly assigned to either the experimental group (N=21) or the control group (N=20). The experimental group participated in a performance assessment intervention that included writing dialogue journals, while the control group engaged in traditional writing tasks without the performance-based approach.

Data collection involved administering a writing pre-test and post-test, along with an Academic Writing Motivation Questionnaire, to both groups before and after the intervention. The writing assessments were scored using a rubric developed by Jacobs et al. (1981), focusing on content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Statistical analyses, including paired sample t-tests and independent samples t-tests, were conducted to evaluate the differences in writing competence and motivation levels between the two groups.

### **Participants**

Prior to the study, in order to select homogeneous intermediate participants, 60 male and female students from two intact classes in an Iraqi university, college of Art, department of English took

Preliminary English Test (PET) whose validity and reliability have already been evaluated. This study used sophomore students who had writing classes provided by the university. Having administered proficiency test (PET), 41 participants whose scores fell between one standard deviation below or above the mean were randomly selected and assigned to the two groups, namely, experimental group (N=21) and control group (N=20). The participants were within the age range of 20-25. Attempts were made to observe homogeneity, that is, from the same level and approximately from the same age.

### **Instruments**

To fulfill the purpose of the study the following instruments were used:

1. Consent form
2. PET Language Proficiency Test
3. A Writing Pre-test and Post-test
4. Scoring rubrics by Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel, Hughey (1981)
5. An Academic Writing Motivation Questionnaire

### **Procedures**

In order to conduct the study, the researcher got the official permission of the head of the university and dean of the faculty and consulted the teachers regarding what they were supposed to do in the classes. In other words, the researcher participated in the classes as an observer and asked the teachers to follow the instructions. The students who participated in this study were informed clearly about all the procedures of the research. They were given notice that the information from the study was confidential and they could also draw back at any time because their participation was voluntary.

Before the treatment, PET test was administered to the population of the study for the purpose of homogenizing them. The researcher administered the reading and writing sections of the test to the participants at the beginning of the term based on which 20 students whose scores were one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the mean score were omitted and 41 homogeneous sophomore English translation students were selected and divided randomly into two groups (i.e., 1 experimental and 1 control). Furthermore, the Academic Writing Motivation Questionnaire was also distributed among the participants of both groups to check the possible difference between the motivation levels of two groups before the treatment.

On the day before the treatment session of the main study, the participants of two groups took a pre-test of writing. The participants of the experimental group were also given some instructions about writing dialogue journals as well as some information about the positive effects it might have on their writing. For the treatment, the participants of the study in the experimental group were asked to write one journal each session on a topic and hand it in to the teacher. The journals were written as a part of routine classroom activities, forming a continuous flow of exchange in single notebooks based on the idea taken from Peyton's (1990) definition, "A dialogue journal is a written ongoing interaction between individual students and their teacher in a bound notebook" (p.199).

As a general strategy, the teacher asked participants to initiate topics in the journals based on their personal interests and choices. They were encouraged to write their experiences or observations as well as their reflections in or outside class; they were also encouraged to connect their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with the learning activities they were engaged in. The participants worked on free-topic writing entries at home. The teacher was supposed to answer them accordingly. Errors were not corrected directly; however, they were mentioned in the teacher's responses to their entries in an indirect way. The teacher wrote sentences that were



pertinent to the participants' errors. Furthermore, students' journals were kept in a file folder over the course of the treatment i.e. in form of portfolios which allowed students and teachers to look through students' work and reflect on their growth. The students in the experiment group prepared portfolios and journals developing their writing language skill, and presented their works in the class. The participants were required to write 20 journal entries during the study. They had to write two journal entries per week, which were submitted to the teacher and then to the researcher. After a period of a ten-week treatment, the participants' journals were collected.

Although the participants in control group were also asked to write paragraphs on topics of interest during the ten-week usual course, they did not undergo the procedures of treatment in the experimental group. They just handed their writings to their teacher for correction.

At the end of the ten-week program, the participants of both groups took a post-test of the other writing. Then their writings were collected, scored, and compared with each other. The scoring rubric consisted of content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The papers were scored on a scale created by Jacobs et al (1981). It worth mentioning that the participants of both experimental and control groups were taught the same course book, The topics of the pre-test and post-test were chosen from *understanding and using English grammar* by Azar and Hagen (2009), the book taught at the Writing 1 course in PNU University.

### Data Analysis

After dividing the participants into experimental and control groups, they were given a writing pre-test and the Academic Writing Motivation questionnaire prior to the treatment in order to check whether there was any significant difference among the performances of the participants in two groups (experimental and control). Before moving to the analyses of the writing pre-test and first administration of Academic Writing Motivation questionnaire, the obtained scores were analyzed using Kolmogorov- Smirnov normality tests which proved the distribution normality.

### Results

In order to check whether there was any significant difference among the performances of the participants in experimental and control groups prior to the treatment; two Independent Sample T-tests were run on the data to indicate any difference.

**Table 1**

*T-test Comparing the Performance of Experimental and Control Group in Writing Pre-test*

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Writing pre-test	Equal variances assumed	.237	.629	.388	39	.700	.500	1.289	-2.109	3.109
	Equal variances not assumed			.388	35.651	.700	.500	1.289	-2.115	3.115

According to findings and statistics shown in the above table  $t(39) = .38$ ,  $P = 0.7$ , hence, it was indicated that there was not any statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level in pre-test scores and participants of two groups were similar regarding their writing proficiency level. To indicate the existence of any difference and to compare the motivation level of participants in two groups before the implementation of treatment, their motivation level was evaluated and analyzed.

**Table 2**

*T-test Comparing the Motivation Level of Experimental and Control Groups prior to the Treatment*

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Motivation pre	Equal variances assumed	.832	.368	.569	39	.573	1.700	2.986	-4.345	7.745
	Equal variances not assumed			.569	37.762	.573	1.700	2.986	-4.347	7.747

Findings of the Independent t-test carried out to test the significance of the observed difference revealed that  $t(39) = .56$ ,  $p = 0.57$ , hence, it was indicated that there was not any statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level in participants' writing motivation level. Having compared participants' performances in pre-test and implementing the treatment, the post-test was given to them and the questionnaire was administered for the second time. After getting assured of the distribution normality of the post-test scores, in order to answer the research questions which dealt with the effectiveness of performance assessment on learners' writing competence and their writing motivation, the obtained data were analyzed using four paired sample t-tests.

**Table 3**

*Paired Samples T-Test for the Comparison of Pre- Test and Post-Test Scores of Experimental and Control Groups*

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Std. Mean Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
				Lower	Upper				



		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	writing pre-experimental - writing post experimental	-6.000	3.584	.801	-7.677	-4.323	-7.488	20	.000
Pair 2	writing pre-control - writing post control	-3.300	2.716	.607	-4.571	-2.029	-5.433	19	.000
Pair 3	motivation pre-control - motivation post control	-8.350	6.683	1.494	-11.478	-5.222	-5.588	19	.000
Pair 4	motivation pre-experimental - motivation post experimental	-12.500	6.549	1.464	-15.565	-9.435	-8.535	20	.000

According to the data obtained from t-test in Table 3, since all the significance levels are .00, it is revealed that that the increase in the mean scores of experimental group learners' writing score between pre and post-test were statistically significant indicating that performance assessment had a positive effect on EFL learners' writing proficiency; in addition, a similar conclusion was drawn from the writing scores of control group.

Furthermore, the comparison of motivation scores revealed that the observed improvement in learners' motivation level in both control and experimental groups were statistically significant since p equaled .00 which were higher than the set level for this study. Therefore, it was included that the participants' motivations improved in both groups from first administration to the second. The results indicated that that performance assessment had a positive effect on EFL learners' writing competence and writing motivation. However, since the results of all groups were significant, two independent samples t-tests were run on the post test scores of both groups to indicate the one which outperformed the others.

**Table 4**

*Comparing the Performance of Participants of both Groups in the Post-test*

Independent Samples Test	
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Writing post-test	Equal variances assumed	1.041	.314	2.092	39	.043	3.200	1.530	.103	6.297
	Equal variances not assumed			2.092	37.411	.043	3.200	1.530	.101	6.299

According to the analysis obtained from Table 4, the difference observed between the mean score of the experimental and control groups was statistically significant since the significance level  $p = .04$  was higher than set  $p$  value i.e.  $.05$ . The results indicates that participants of the experimental group were more successful than the other group in terms of improving their writing proficiency which means that in this study the performance assessment was more effective in this study. To compare the motivation level of the both groups in second administration of the questionnaire at the end of the experiment, another independent samples t-test was used.

**Table 5**  
*Comparing the Motivation Level of Participants of both Groups in at the end of the Study*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Motivation post	Equal variances assumed	.480	.493	2.181	39	.035	5.850	2.682	.420	11.280
	Equal variances not assumed			2.181	37.211	.036	5.850	2.682	.417	11.283

The results of carried out independent-samples t-test proved the significance of difference in scores for the experimental control groups since  $p = .03$  that is, the effect of performance assessment on learners' learners' motivation was significant. In other words, regarding the significant difference and comparing the mean scores it was concluded that the treatment in experimental group enhanced learners' writing motivation better than control group.



### Discussion

Regarding the role of assessment in education and its effect on learners' performances, Wiliam and Thompson (2017) highlights the impact of assessment stating that its impact is significantly observable on students' performance. The way students approach learning determines the way they think about classroom assignments and tests (Wiliam & Thompson, 2017).

With the development of educational systems and theories, there has been a change in the perspectives toward the assessment principles and approaches as well. According to scholars, recent assessment approaches are attempting to increase the correspondence between what students need to learn and what is expected for them to know once they finish their studies (Clark, 2012). The results of the study revealed a significant difference between the writing mean scores of the experimental and the control groups (i.e., the writing mean score of the experimental group was significantly more than that of the control group). Thus, the researcher concludes that using performance assessment has significantly increased the writing proficiency score of the experimental group. Moreover, regarding the learners' attitude toward writing, the results indicated that the experimental group developed a higher level of motivation under the effect of performance assessment treatment.

In line with this study, Bas's (2011) study supports the findings of the present research. According to him, who examined the effects of project-based learning on ninth grade students' academic achievements and attitude towards English lessons in EFL context, there was a significant statistical difference between the experimental group achievement and that of the control group based on an independent samples t-test. Concerning their attitude towards English lessons, the findings revealed that the experimental group had a more positive attitude and higher performance than the control group.

In addition, regarding the effect of performance assessment on learning and motivation, the results are in line with the findings of the study conducted by Brookhart and Durkin (2013). The study showed the relevance and the benefits of performance-based assessment at the expense of paper-and-pencil tests. With performance assessment, the learners learnt for the sake of learning and in addition, they wanted to learn from their classmates or help them learn. Students in this study further reported that with performance assessment, they were trying hard for the performance but not for the test or the grades. Finally, it worth mentioning that their study confirmed that the choice of the tasks and the types of assessment can have a positive impact on learners' motivation to carry out a task.

### Conclusion

The results of this study offer strong proof that performance evaluation has a favorable impact on Iraqi EFL learners' writing motivation and writing competency. When compared to the control group, the experimental group showed a significant increase in writing proficiency and motivation. This indicates that performance-based assessments are useful in creating a more stimulating and encouraging learning environment. These findings imply that in order to improve learning outcomes and student engagement, teachers should think about including performance assessment techniques into their lesson plans. Subsequent studies may examine the enduring impacts of performance evaluation on language acquisition and examine its suitability for various educational environments and student populations. All things considered, this study adds to the increasing corpus of research supporting novel approaches to assessment that put an emphasis on student participation and real-world learning opportunities.

The study's conclusions have a big impact on policies and practices in education. Initially, they recommend that teachers improve their pedagogical approaches by integrating performance evaluations, departing from conventional techniques to cultivate a more captivating and encouraging educational setting. This change may result in the creation of curricula that prioritize

student motivation and useful writing abilities. Furthermore, teacher professional development initiatives ought to concentrate on providing educators with the resources and techniques required to successfully administer performance evaluations in the classroom. Teaching professionals can encourage student autonomy and deeper writing process participation by taking a more student-centered approach. The study also underlines the need for further research into the long-term effects of performance evaluations in a variety of educational contexts and groups, which could lead to a more comprehensive understanding of effective assessment techniques. Furthermore, when developing assessment frameworks, educational planners are encouraged to consider performance assessments because these cutting-edge methodologies can supplement a more comprehensive method of assessing student achievement. Finally, students who were exposed to performance assessments were much more motivated to write, emphasizing the need of prioritizing approaches that inspire and engage learners in addition to skill evaluation. This will contribute to a more effective and engaging learning environment for EFL students.

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