**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

**MODERATED-MEDIATION EFFECTS OF ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION, SELF-EFFICACY AND ANXIETY ON WRITING PERFORMANCE AMONG IRAQI EFL UNDERGRADUATES**

**AHMED ABDULATEEF SABTI**

**FBMK 2019 10**

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By

**AHMED ABDULATEEF SABTI**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**April 2019**

# DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to

My father
A strong and gentle soul who taught me to trust in Allah and believe in hard work

My mother,
Whose affection, love, encouragement, and prayers of day and night have enabled me
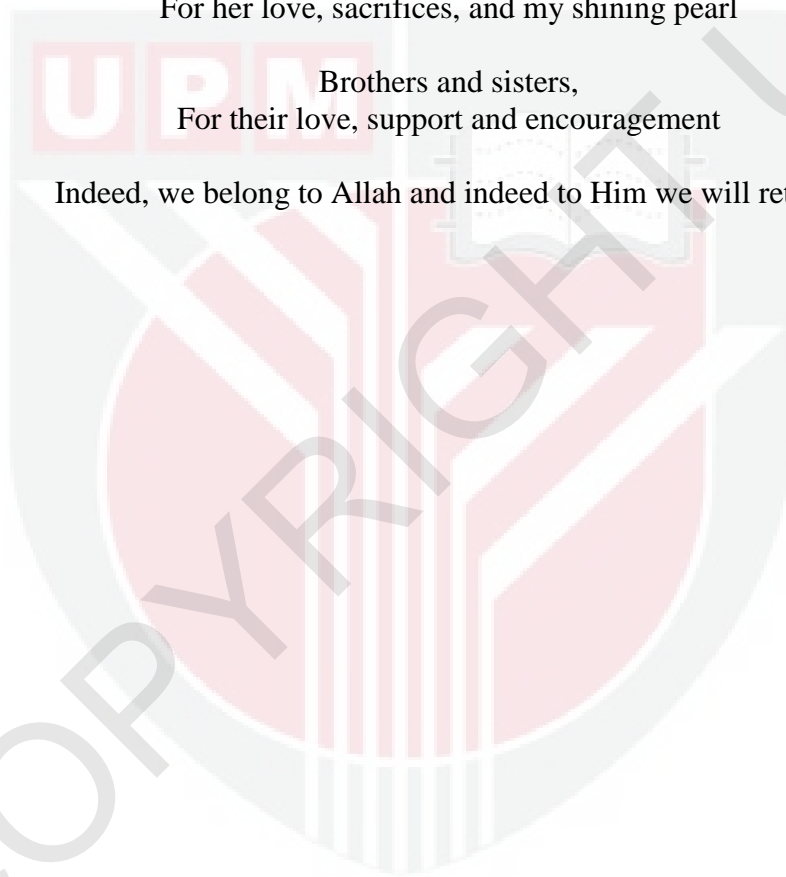to accomplish my goals

My beloved wife,
For her love, sacrifices, and my shining pearl

Brothers and sisters,
For their love, support and encouragement

Indeed, we belong to Allah and indeed to Him we will return.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy


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**April 2019**


**Chairman : Associate Professor Sabariah Md Rashid, PhD**
**Faculty : Modern Languages and Communication**


Writing, which is deemed an intricate task for many ESL and EFL writers, has been associated with learner variables, such as lack of competency in the intended language. In addition, affective variables such as lack of confidence, motivation, self-efficacy, and anxiety, have also been identified as negatively influencing EFL writing in various studies. The current study aims to examine the relationship of Iraqi EFL writing performance with affective variables, namely writing achievement motivation, writing self-efficacy and writing anxiety. It also attempts to examine a developed moderated mediation model of achievement motivation, self-efficacy and anxiety effects on writing performance among Iraqi EFL undergraduate students.


The study adopted a quantitative approach to address the phenomenon under investigation. The participants of the study included 300 Iraqi EFL undergraduate students. Data of the study were collected via four instruments, namely three questionnaires: Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) to measure the students' anxiety towards EFL writing, Writer Self-Perception Scale (WSPS) to measure the students' self-perception of writing ability, Achievement Goal Questionnaire (AGQ) to elicit information pertaining to the students' achievement motivational goals towards writing skill, and finally a descriptive writing task.


The findings of the study indicate that a small number of the participants had high level of debilitating writing anxiety while a majority had high level of facilitating writing anxiety, writing achievement motivation and writing self-efficacy. In addition, the latter adopted the mastery-approach goal and performance-approach goal as well as attained a satisfactory writing performance, whereas the former adopted

performance-avoidance goal and performed disappointingly on the assigned writing task.

The findings also reveal that writing self-efficacy was a powerful predictor of students' writing performance and a significant mediating variable that facilitated the relationship between writing achievement motivation and writing performance. The findings are in support of the social cognitive theory that self-efficacy is a powerful predictor of students' writing outcomes and has a mediational role.

The study also demonstrates that facilitating writing anxiety moderated the relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance positively, whereas debilitating writing anxiety moderated that relationship negatively. In addition, the study shows that there was a positive relationship between debilitating writing anxiety and performance-avoidance goal, and they both were negatively correlated with writing performance. These findings are in line with the theories of the affective filter hypothesis (AFH) and achievement goal theory (AGT), which stress that performance-avoidance goals are positively associated with debilitating anxiety, which could lead to an unsatisfactory outcome. The study recommends that EFL instructors need to consider these affective sub-dimensions of debilitating anxiety and performance-avoidance goals in EFL writing instruction in order to facilitate the teaching and learning process of EFL writing.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**ANALISIS KESAN PENGANTARAAN-PENYEDERHANAAN PEMBOLEH UBAH MOTIVASI PENCAPAIAN, EFIKASI KENDIRI DAN KERESAHAN KE ATAS PRESTASI PENULISAN DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR PRASISWAZAH IRAQ**

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Penulisan, yang dianggap sebagai suatu tugasan yang rumit bagi kebanyakan penulis ESL dan EFL, telah dikaitkan dengan pemboleh ubah pelajar, seperti kekurangan kompetensi dalam bahasa sasaran. Di samping itu, faktor afektif seperti kekurangan keyakinan, motivasi, efikasi kendiri dan keresahan, telah pun dikenal pasti secara negatif mempengaruhi penulisan dalam pelbagai kajian. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti perkaitan prestasi penulisan EFL pelajar Iraq dengan pemboleh ubah afektif, iaitu motivasi pencapaian penulisan, efikasi kendiri penulisan dan keresahan penulisan. Ia juga cuba untuk menguji mediasi motivasi pencapaian termoderasi, efikasi kendiri dan kesan keresahan ke atas prestasi penulisan dalam kalangan pelajar prasiswazah EFL Iraq.

Kajian ini menerima guna pendekatan kuantitatif bagai menangani fenomena yang diselidiki. Responden kajian ini termasuk 300 orang pelajar prasiswazah EFL Iraq. Data kajian ini telah dikumpul melalui empat instrumen, iaitu tiga soal selidik: Inventori Keresahan Penulisan Bahasa Kedua *"SLWAI"* bagi mengukur keresahan pelajar terhadap penulisan EFL, Skala Persepsi Kendiri Penulis *"WSPS"* bagi mengukur persepsi kendiri kebolehan penulisan pelajar, Soal selidik Matlamat Pencapaian *"AGQ"* bagi memperoleh maklumat berkaitan matlamat motivasi pencapaian pelajar terhadap kemahiran menulis, dan akhirnya suatu tugasan penulisan yang deskriptif.

Dapatan kajian memperlihatkan bahawa sebilangan kecil responden mempunyai kadar keresahan penulisan melemahkan yang tinggi manakala majoriti responden mempunyai kadar keresahan penulisan menggalakkan, motivasi pencapaian penulisan

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dan efikasi kendiri penulisan yang tinggi. Di samping itu, responden kadar keresahan penulisan menggalakkan menerima guna matlamat pendekatan penguasaan dan matlamat pendekatan prestasi di samping memperoleh prestasi penulisan yang memuaskan, manakala responden kadar keresahan melemahkan mendukung matlamat pengelakan prestasi dan dengan kecewanya melaksanakan tugasan penulisan yang diberikan.

Dapatan juga menunjukkan bahawa efikasi kendiri merupakan prediktor yang sangat kuat bagi prestasi penulisan pelajar dan merupakan konstruk mediasi efektif yang menggalakkan perkaitan antara motivasi pencapaian penulisan dan prestasi penulisan. Dapatan kajian ini sangat menyokong teori kognitif sosial yang menyatakan bahawa efikasi kendiri merupakan prediktor hasil penulisan pelajar yang sangat kuat dan mempunyai peranan mediasi.

Kajian ini juga mendemonstrasikan bahawa penggalakan keresahan penulisan memoderasikan perkaitan secara positif antara efikasi kendiri dan prestasi penulisan, manakala pelemahan keresahan penulisan secara negatif memoderasikan perkaitan tersebut. Dapatan kajian ini menyokong dua teori, iaitu hipotesis penapis afektif (AFH) dan teori matlamat pencapaian (AGT), yang menekankan bahawa matlamat pengelakan prestasi secara positif berkaitan dengan pelemahan keresahan dan kerap memberikan hasil yang tidak memuaskan. Kajian ini mengesyorkan bahawa instruktor EFL perlu mengambil kira subdimensi pelemahan afektif tersebut dan matlamat pengelakan prestasi dalam pengajaran penulisan EFL bagi menggalakkan proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran penulisan EFL.

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All praise and thanks to Almighty Allah, with His blessing giving me the strength and passion, I could manage to finish the research until this manuscript completed be compiled.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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Date:

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**Declaration by graduate student**

I hereby confirm that:
- this thesis is my original work;
- quotations, illustrations and citations have been duly referenced;
- this thesis has not been submitted previously or concurrently for any other degree at any other institutions;
- intellectual property from the thesis and copyright of thesis are fully-owned by Universiti Putra Malaysia, as according to the Universiti Putra Malaysia (Research) Rules 2012;
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Signature: _____  Date: _____

Name and Matric No**.:** Ahmed Abdulateef Sabti, GS41605

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| | |
|---|---|
| ESL | English as a Second Language |
| EFL | English as a Foreign Language |
| EPLT | English Proficiency Level Test |
| AFH | Affective Filter Hypothesis |
| LAD | Language Acquisition Device |
| SCT | Social Cognitive Theory |
| AGT | Achievement Goal Theory |
| WAM | Writing Achievement Motivation |
| WA | Writing Anxiety |
| WSE | Writing Self-efficacy |
| WP | Writing Performance |
| FAC | Facilitating Writing Anxiety |
| DEB | Debilitating Writing Anxiety |
| MAS.A | Mastery-Approach Goal |
| APP.M | Performance-Approach Goal |
| AVO.M | Performance-Avoidance Goal |
| GPR | General Progress |
| SPR | Specific Progress |
| OC | Observational Comparison |
| SF | Social Feedback |
| PS | Physiological States |
| WSPS | Writer Self-Perception Scale |
| SLWAI | Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory |
| AGQ | Achievement Goal Questionnaire |
| IV | Independent Variable |
| DV | Dependent Variable |
| SEM | Structural Equation Modelling |
| MMA | Measurement Model Assessment |
| SMA | Structural Model Assessment |
| CR | Composite Reliability |
| AVE | Average Variance Extracted |
| MOE | Ministry of Education |
| MHESR | Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization |

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises fundamental aspects related to the study. It begins with a discussion of the background to the study which gives an overview about the main variables of the study followed by the statement of the problem. This chapter proceeds with the research objectives and questions and hypotheses. The scope of the study is also discussed in this chapter. This is followed by the significance of the study and the explanation of theoretical framework and conceptual model of the study. Finally, the operational definitions of terms specify the terms used in the study.

### 1.2 Background of the Study

In most Arab countries, English language is taught as a foreign language in schools. The curriculum of most Arab schools deals with the four skills of English language (listening, reading, writing, and speaking). However, the teaching and learning in Arab schools may not address the different English language skills adequately, in particular, the writing skill (Seyabi & Tuzlukova, 2014). As stated by Al-Mekhlafi (2011), "a main characteristic of shortcoming in teaching English as FL for schools level in Arab countries is that most of the practice given is limited to language use at the sentence level" (p.17). For instance, Iraqi schools, as a part of the Arab world and has an EFL context, are not an exception and may not meet the requirements of higher education. In high schools, students rely greatly on their teachers (teacher-centered at school), yet at universities they are autonomous learners (learner-centered). Hence, shifting from school to university seems to pose great challenges for school leavers, which can be described as "traversing the chasm" indicating a big gap between schools and universities (Seyabi & Tuzlukova, 2014, p. 37). On the basis of this, freshman students (first year university students), for example, may not meet the academic requirements of university such as assignments, and essays written in a well-form. These challenges could influence learners' confidence and motivation that probably lead to a disappointing behavior. As far as writing skill is concerned, the aforementioned challenges may make pre-university students anxious and demotivated as they struggle with the writing skill in English language.

EFL writing, which is generally a challenging skill to be acquired by EFL students, is regarded as a complex activity compared to other language skills. It is defined by numerous academics as meaningful, productive, and complex learning process (Hyland 2004; Lei 2008; Santoso, 2008). Also, it is defined as an intricate cognitive activity involving attention at multiple levels: lexical and grammatical level, sentence and paragraph level as well as a thematic level (Lavelle et al., 2002).

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In the case of EFL context, writing is one of most essential skills that needs to be mastered. Thus, EFL learners have to acquire a certain level of proficiency to produce well-written work. Iraqi students who are within an EFL context tend to show poor writing performance. This is likely due to the lack of English language practice (Abbas, 2016) which may affect their self-confidence, self-efficacy, and achievement motivation, which may further hamper their learning process and so on (Abed-Latif, 2007; Pajares & Valiante, 2008).

Several variables such as achievement motivation, attitude, self-efficacy, and anxiety have been found to affect the English language learning process (Erkan & Saban, 2011; Liu, 2006). These variables may hinder students' acquisition of key language skills, especially writing which has an affective role in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016; Senko, 2016; Xiaoyan Du, 2009).

Anxiety, as one of the aforementioned variables, has been identified as the major contributing factor towards learners' performance. It has been identified as a predictor that bears either a positive or an adverse effect on the writing outcome for L1, ESL or EFL learners (Pajares, 2003; Park & French, 2013; Tsao, Tseng & Wang, 2017; Yan, Pan & Wang, 2018). In other words, it operates as a predictor that either to affect or enhance a learner's academic performance. Added to this, anxiety can operate as a moderator, which has been examined by previously published works, but in different disciplines, i.e., Economics and Business; Hospitality and Tourism; Psychology (Hatfield & Dula, 2014; Vlachos et al., 2010; Yang & Forney, 2013). Based on this, it can play as a moderating role in a relationship between two correlated variables. In specific terms, anxiety as a moderator can either weaken or strengthen a relationship.

On the contrary, self-efficacy, as also one of the aforementioned variables, is an essential factor for learners' performance prediction and it is deemed as a contributing factor of persons' learning, motivation, and achievement (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016; Schunk & Pajares, 2009). Put differently, self-efficacy acts as a powerful element of enhancing individuals' motivation and achievement. Besides that, self-efficacy can be a mediator to mediate and enhance a relationship between two associated variables. This hypothesis is constructed based on the social cognitive theory. As for achievement motivation, it is also deemed one of the powerful predictors that leads to positive outcomes (Senko, 2016).

In this light, the purpose of this study is to examine how the two vital variables, i.e. writing achievement motivation and writing self-efficacy are related to each other and also identified as key predictors of EFL learners' writing performance (Bandura & Locke, 2003; Fatemi & Vahidnia, 2013; Graham & Weiner, 1996). Concurrently, this study also attempts to examine writing self-efficacy as a mediator in the relationship between writing achievement motivation and EFL writing performance. Also, in the present study, anxiety is examined as the predictive and moderating variable. A moderator means a variable that may strengthen or weaken a relationship between correlated variables. In this light, writing anxiety is treated as a moderating variable in the relationship between writing self-efficacy and EFL writing performance.

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Consequently, the relationship between writing self-efficacy and the EFL writing performance could depend on the value of the moderator represented by anxiety variable. Since the scope of the present study is in Iraq as being an EFL context, the following section discusses how English is taught in the educational system in Iraq.

### 1.2.1 An Overview of the Educational System in Iraq

The Iraqi educational system has similar curriculum levels to many educational systems that exist around the world, for instance the kindergarten, primary, and secondary education (intermediate and preparatory education), which is governed by the Ministry of Education (MOE). Higher education includes universities, institutes, colleges, commissions and research centers, which is under the surveillance and management by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHESR).

The educational system in Iraq is a state-controlled system and is highly centralized. It is controlled by the two educational authorities, the MOE, and the MHESR. These authorities are responsible in the enforcement and implementations of standardized syllabi in schools and tertiary institutions, devising guidelines and deadlines to be covered by the educators at each stage of the study. According to the survey done by the Educational Research and Study Centre of MOE of Iraq (2001), the MOE in Iraq is also responsible for designing and implementing the educational policy for execution throughout the country and suggesting development plans with regards to curriculum structures, and approving and revising the syllabus.

Across all levels of education, the 2005 Federal Constitution of Iraq guarantees the right of all Iraqi's to access free education. The Iraqi MOE's Law No. (22) for the year 2011 stated that education is free at all levels — primary, secondary and university — for all citizens, governed as compulsory from the primary level to ensure the eradication of illiteracy among Iraqi citizens.

The duration for primary school is six years for boys and girls, starting at the age of six. The duration for secondary education is six years and is divided into two stages: intermediate and preparatory. Intermediate level is three years for students aged 12 to 14 years. The duration for preparatory level is divided into three years which are the $4^{th}$, $5^{th}$, and $6^{th}$ stages. Each level is streamed into the art and science stream. The education framework is designed in such a way to prepare students for joining the university study.

Through primary and secondary education, students must pass three national standardized examinations, one at the end of each level of study, to provide them with a certificate and be allowed to be admitted into the next level of education. The students obtain certificates upon completing each level of education. They obtain the primary certificate (Ibtidaya certificate), the intermediate certificate (Mitwasitta

certificate), and the preparatory certificate (Adadiyah certificate) upon completing the primary level, intermediate level, and preparatory level, respectively.

Across all grade levels, English is taught as a foreign language and considered as one of the major or important subjects in the Iraqi schools. Moreover, students are required to study English five-days a week for 45 minutes a day. Furthermore, English is made compulsory as the required entrance examination, which is offered once a year to the students who want to join the English department at a university level.

With regard to the English syllabus in both primary and secondary schools, the MOE has implemented a new textbook series of teaching English named as 'Iraqi opportunities' and 'Learn for Iraq'. These textbook series began to be taught in the Iraqi primary and secondary schools. 'Iraqi opportunities' began to be taught starting from the 1st primary school to 4th preparatory grade, whereas, 'Learn for Iraq' began to be taught for the 5th and 6th preparatory grades.

The higher education sector deals with the Diploma, Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Master of Arts (M.A.), and Doctor of Philosophy's (Ph.D.) studies. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) survey in 2004, Iraqi universities comprise two hundred colleges with about eight hundred departments and twenty-eight specialized institutes or research centers. In higher education fields, the diploma takes two-years; Bachelor takes four years with exception of Medicine which takes six years, MA takes at least two-year minimum and Ph.D. takes at least three years. With regard to English syllabus, students in the Department of English are required to study courses related to language, literature, and education. In relation to the writing skill, it is a compulsory subject in the four years during the Bachelor degree. Since the study seeks to examine the relationships between EFL writing performance and some affective variables, the next section highlights the main affective variables of this research.

### 1.2.2 An Overview of the Constructs of the Research

The present study attempts to examine the concept of self-efficacy as a predictive and mediational variable which was first initiated by Bandura (1986). According to Bandura, self-efficacy denotes individuals' beliefs about their ability to perform effectively at predefined tasks. Meanwhile, Schunk and DiBenedetto (2016) indicated that high level of self-efficacy can contribute to determine how much effort that individuals can exert on an activity, and how resilient these individuals are when confronting difficulties. In other words, individuals with high level of self-efficacy often have a strong desire to take part in a new learning task and they interpret tough tasks as a form of challenge. Conversely, individuals with low levels of self-efficacy might deal with difficult tasks as threats rather than challenges, in turn, it can arouse anxiety and stress. Schunk and DiBenedetto (2016) emphasize that individuals who have low levels of self-efficacy might not be able to cope with difficult tasks which may result in arousing anxiety and stress; hence could steer to poor performance.

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Self-efficacy has also been shown to be positively associated with the concept of motivation and academic achievement. It enhances a student's motivation and achievement. Schunk and DiBenedetto (2016) believe that self-efficacy can increase learners' motivation and could also enhance their ability and performance.

Meanwhile, self-efficacy has been examined as a predictive and mediational role in different fields (i.e., economic, tourism and language learning) as postulated by the social cognitive theory. Mediator is a third variable which operates as an intervening variable to explain a relationship between two correlated variables. Pajares (2003), for instance, stresses that writing self-efficacy is a signifcant predictor for writing outcomes and can also play a mediating variable. A study by Pajares and Valiante (2008), also found that self-efficacy is an effective predictor of students' performance. As for the mediating role, Yusuf (2010) affirmed that "the mediational role of efficacy in the relationship between motivation and outcome have been reported" (p. 4). Likewise, some other researchers also confirmed that self-efficacy can play as a mediating role (Abd-Elmotaleb & Saha, 2013; Llorca-Mestre, Richaud, & Malonda-Vidal, 2017; Zhen, Liu, Ding, Wang, Liu, & Xu, 2017). Hence, this study examines self-efficacy as a predictor of EFL writing performance as well as a mediator in the relationship between writing achievement motivation and EFL writing performance.

Meanwhile, a variable that is assigned as a predictor and a moderator in this study is the anxiety variable. Moderator means an independent variable that can directly change the strength or even the direction of a relationship between two correlated variables in a model. In other words, it is an independent variable that may strengthen or weaken a relationship between correlated variables (Hair et al., 2017). Previous studies on anxiety have identified it as either a facilitative variable that stimulates and encourages a learner, or a debilitative variable that prevents or obstructs a learner from achieving his objectives (Aida, 1994). Whilst facilitating anxiety (positive anxiety) motivates learners to engage in a new learning task that leads them to adopt approach behavior, debilitating anxiety (negative anxiety) stimulates learners to escape from a given learning task which may result in adoption of avoidance behavior (Valmori, 2016). Anxiety variable has been examined in relation to the four English language skills: speaking (Hertz, Kerkhof and Van Woerkum, 2016), reading (Sabti et al., 2016), listening (Lili, 2016), and writing (Challob, Bakar and Latif, 2016; Cheng, 2004). In this light, this study focuses on writing anxiety.

Writing anxiety (debilitating writing anxiety) indicates the negative experience of a student in performing a given task (Zhang, 2001). In other words, it is a negative experience that a student undergoes during the evaluation stage of his writing (Erkan & Saban, 2011). In many studies, writing anxiety has been used interchangeably with writing apprehension (Abdel-Latif, 2007; Challob et al., 2016; Erkan & Saban, 2011; Salem & Al Dyiar, 2014). These two are similar as they are correlated negatively with a student's achievement. Accordingly, debilitating writing anxiety has also been associated negatively with other variables, namely motivation, attitudes and self-efficacy (Kırmızı & Kırmızı, 2015; Singh & Rajalingam, 2012).

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The relationship between debilitating writing anxiety with variables such as self-efficacy was examined by Pajares (2003) among ESL undergraduate students. This study found that the impact of debilitating anxiety is nullified when a learner's self-efficacy is controlled. This suggests that a higher level of writing self-efficacy contributed significantly towards reducing debilitating writing anxiety.

The discussion in the previous paragraph suggests that debilitating anxiety could affect students' performance in different language skills (Schunk, & DiBenedetto, 2014; Senko, 2016). In this regard, a student with such an anxiety is expected to perform poorly. In other words, a higher level of debilitating anxiety is related to lower self-efficacy towards writing, i.e. an inverse relationship. This negative correlation was established among tertiary level EFL students in the Turkish context in that debilitating writing anxiety has a negative relationship with writing performance and writing self-efficacy (Erkan & Saban, 2011).

On the contrary, anxiety variable can also be a facilitating factor that could enable the delivery of input to the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) which result in simplifying one's comprehension and leading to exemplary behavior in writing (positive Output) (Kader, 2016; Nimehchisalem, 2000; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014; Park & French, 2013). Added to this, anxiety variable can also be a moderating construct either to facilitate or debilitate a relationship between two correlated variables. Hence, writing anxiety is either a facilitative variable that fosters or a debilitative one that ruins a relationship between two correlated variables such as writing self-efficacy and writing performance. Accordingly, it may either weaken or strengthen such a relationship. Based on this, writing anxiety is examined as a predictor as well as a moderating role in the relationship between writing self-efficacy and EFL writing performance in this study.

Furthermore, the present research also focuses on achievement motivation variable, which is termed either as achievement motivation or achievement goal orientation. Elliot and Church (1997) describe achievement motivation as the purpose of task engagement. Specifically, it identifies the factors that contribute towards making students approach success or to avoid failure in academic settings (Maehr & Zusho, 2009; Senko, 2016). Rather, achievement motivation has been defined as a strong desire or reason for a learner to participate in a particular learning task (Senko, 2016). Achievement motivation initially has two basic goals which were traditionally labelled as mastery-approach goal and performance-approach goal (Maehr & Zusho, 2009; Senko, 2016). The former is related to the development of ability, whereas the latter is related to the demonstration of ability. Subsequently, another goal, namely performance-avoidance goal which focuses on avoiding negative assessments of competence has been included (Maehr & Zusho, 2009; Senko, 2016).

Yusuf (2011) argues that achievement motivation is a powerful predictor of learners' achievement. For example, a person who believes in his ability to perform a certain task will have a stronger personal sense of efficacy, and lower levels of anxiety. Then, he adopts either mastery-approach goal or performance-approach goal to accomplish

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the task. Also, this individual considers the requirements of the task as challenges rather than threats (Elliot & Church, 1997; Senko et al., 2011). This has been expounded by achievement goal theory in that the success in the acquisition of a second/foreign language is positively related to mastery-approach goal or performance-approach goal as well as being related to high self-confidence and low levels of debilitating anxiety (Maehr & Zusho, 2009; Senko, 2016). On the other hand, students who adopt performance-avoidance goal often display high levels of anxiety. Senko (2016), for instance, endorses this view that "performance-avoidance goals do elicit high anxiety and threat appraisals, promote risk-avoidance, disrupt task focus, and undermine academic achievement" (p. 80). As such, students with these traits often suffer from a mental block that prevents success owing to high anxiety, low motivation, and low self-efficacy.

The discussion in the previous paragraphs present an overview on the relationships between the variables, namely, self-efficacy and achievement motivation, together with the effects of anxiety and the contributions of the three varaibles toward the EFL writing performance. The discussion suggests that self-efficacy is a central and dynamic variable in enhancing learners' achievement. In this regard, self efficacy could enhance achievement motivation and a language learner's performance. On the other hand, individuals with lower self-efficacy may have more debilitative anxiety, which is a significant predictor in determining students' performance. In relation to this, since the social cognitive theory suggests that self-efficacy plays a predictive and mediational role in the writing skill, self-efficacy is therefore applied as a predictor and mediator in this study, whereby its mediating role is used to assess the relationship between writing achievement motivation and EFL writing performance. Besides that, writing anxiety is treated as a predictor and moderator to examine the relationship between writing self-efficacy and EFL writing performance.

## 1.3     Statement of the Problem

Writing is generally considered a complex and a challenging task for novice writers. This problem is further compounded when writing in a language that is not one's mother tongue such as EFL/ESL writing (Challob et al., 2016; Jalaluddin et al., 2015). In the EFL context, the lack of ability for students to express themselves in EFL writing has been associated with variables such as lack of confidence, motivation, self-efficacy, and feeling of anxiety. Previous research related to this topic has documented that such variables affected EFL writing performance and students who have such attributes tend to perform disappointingly in writing (Abdel-Latif, 2007; Challob et al., 2016; Fatemi & Vahidnia, 2013; Kırmızı & Kırmızı, 2015).

It has been observed that Arab students tend to have difficulties when it comes to learning the essential English language skills of speaking, listening, reading and particularly, writing. This is attributed to the lack of experience and practice in the appropriate use of English as well as different cultural backgrounds that these students come from, which could trigger anxiety level among these students and makes it more difficult for them to acquire the language skills. Iraqi students, being in an EFL context

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with minimal exposure and use of English, face such problems while learning the target language. For instance, Erkan and Saban (2011) affirmed that students sometimes show poor writing performance because of debilitating anxiety and a lack of self-efficacy and motivation which play a considerable role in academic writing skill.

High levels of debilitating anxiety among students seem to impede their writing process and lead to poor writing performance. Added to this, high levels of debilitative anxiety contribute to the drop in the levels of students' self-efficacy, motivation and self-confidence (Erkan & Saban, 2011; Kırmızı & Kırmızı, 2015; Pajares, 2003). Some researchers also support the viewpoint that students who have higher debilitating writing anxiety are generally unable to demonstrate their full writing potential (Cheng, 2004; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016, Senko, 2016). It is essential, therefore, that such students possess more self-belief and greater motivation to help them put in greater effort to enhance their writing performance.

Previous studies have shown that writing performance is associated with numerous variables such as lack of self-efficacy and achievement motivation, anxiety and stress (Aljafen, 2013; Al-Sawalha & Foo, 2013; Chea & Shumow, 2017; Tsao et al., 2017; Yan et al., 2018). The effects of such variables on performance have been given due attention by researchers in the areas of educational psychology and education. Several related studies have revealed that self-efficacy and achievement motivation are positively related to students' learning and performance (Agustrianti, Cahyono & Laksmi, 2016; Chen, 2016; Zhang et al., 2015). Meanwhile, in the area of language learning, a few studies have examined the relationship between the affective variables: anxiety, self-efficacy and achievement motivation, and EFL writing performance in the EFL context, but not all at once: writing performance, writing apprehension, self-efficacy and attitudes (Erkan & Saban, 2011); English writing, domain-specific motivation and self-efficacy (Zhang & Guo, 2013); motivation, anxiety and self-efficacy (Csizér & Piniel, 2013); L2 learners' writing self-efficacy and writing anxiety (Kırmızı, & Kırmızı, 2015); self-efficacy and motivation (Fatemi & Vahidnia, 2013); writing self-efficacy, writing goal orientation, and writing achievement (Chea & Shumow, 2017). However, there is still a lack of research on the relationship between writing anxiety, writing self-efficacy, writing achievement motivation and writing performance particularly, in the Iraqi EFL context. Thus, it is timely to investigate these variables as all of them are major affective variables that could affect writing performance of EFL learners.

Moreover, learners' variables such as anxiety, self-efficacy and motivation have been studied in the areas of L1 and L2 writing (Fakeye & Ohia, 2016; Foroutan & Noordin, 2012; Prat-Sala & Redford, 2012; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994), but there is a scarcity of research with all the four variables included simultaneously: anxiety, self-efficacy, achievement motivation and EFL writing performance in EFL writing research. The current study, therefore, seeks to examine the four aforementioned variables in addition to self-efficacy in terms of its role as a mediating variable and anxiety as a moderating variable through a model in this study. In addition, to date,

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there have seen a few attempts to examine the role of self-efficacy as a mediator (Pajares & Johnson,1996) but not in the relationship between writing achievement motivation and EFL writing performance. Besides that, it may be said there is no reliable evidence that a study has examined the role of writing anxiety as a moderator in the relationship between writing self-efficacy and EFL writing performance in the field of English language studies. In this light, it is deemed necessary to investigate how the writing self-efficacy variable mediates the aforementioned relationship as well as how the writing anxiety variable moderates the aforementioned relationship.

Over the past decade, various studies have investigated writing and the anxiety variable in the ESL/EFL context (Abed-Latif, 2007; Armendaris, 2009; Mills et al., 2006). In the same vein, but during this decade, a lot of research have examined writing and anxiety variable in the ESL/EFL context (Al-Sawalha & Foo, 2013; Kırmızı & Kırmızı, 2015; McAllister, 2014; Yan et al., 2018). The anxiety variable has also been investigated as a moderator, but in other fields such as Economics and Business (Vlachos et al., 2010); Hospitality and Tourism (Yang & Forney, 2013); and Clinical Psychology (Hatfield & Dula, 2014). According to these studies, anxiety was a negative moderator and demonstrated a debilitating effect. Nonetheless, it may be said that there is no documented record or a study that has examined anxiety as a moderating role in the relationship between writing self-efficacy variable and writing performance, specifically in the EFL context. Therefore, the current study seeks to examine whether anxiety moderates the relationship between writing self-efficacy and EFL writing performance and how this could affect writing performance of Iraqi undergraduate students.

Related to this are studies that have examined self-efficacy in the ESL context (Mills, Pajares & Herron, 2006; Sanders-Reio, 2010; Singh & Rajalingam, 2012). Likewise, numerous studies have investigated self-efficacy in relation to EFL writing (Erkan & Saban, 2011; Kırmızı & Kırmızı, 2015; Zhang & Guo, 2013). These studies in both ESL/EFL contexts have only examined self-efficacy as a predictor variable of writing performance. Although extensive studies have been carried out on self-efficacy, it may be said that no single study exists or no reliable evidence has emerged from both contexts with regard to the use of self-efficacy variable as a mediator in the relationship between writing achievement motivation and EFL writing performance. In this light, the present study examines the role of self-efficacy in writing in the relationship between writing achievement motivation and writing performance.

In regard to writing skill, most previous studies have evaluated the effects of pedagogical intervention or strategy instruction on writing performance. Although there are a number of studies addressing writing investigation into writing performance, most of these studies have mainly focused on pedagogical interventions and strategy instructions with the aim to develop students' writing (McDonough & McDonough, 2014; McMullen, 2009; Yang, Badger & Yu, 2009). In addressing these aspects, a major portion of writing research has focused on the link between pedagogical interventions and writing outcomes, but very little attention has been given to the three variables at once, namely anxiety, self-efficacy and achievement

motivation with EFL writing performance. Thus, the present study aims to apply multi-dimensional constructs to examine students' anxiety in addition to self-efficacy, achievement motivation, and EFL writing performance.

In light of the synthesised literature on the different affective variables and writing performance in the EFL context, this study focuses on examining the model consisting of four variables, namely, writing achievement motivation, writing self-efficacy, writing anxiety and EFL writing performance. Specifically, this model aims to examine the direct and indirect effects of the aforementioned variables on the writing performance based on a moderated mediation model using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis.

## 1.4       Objectives of the Study

This study addresses the following objectives:

1- To examine variability in EFL writing performance across levels of writing achievement motivation, writing self-efficacy and writing anxiety.
2- To assess the role of self-efficacy as a mediator in the relationships between achievement motivation and EFL writing performance.
3- To assess the role of facilitating anxiety as a moderator in the relationship between self-efficacy and EFL writing performance.
4- To assess the role of debilitating anxiety as a moderator in the relationship between self-efficacy and EFL writing performance.
5- To examine the interrelationships between mastery-approach goal, performance-approach goal, performance-avoidance goal, facilitating anxiety, debilitating anxiety, and EFL writing performance.

## 1.5      Research Question and Hypotheses

To address the objectives stated in section 1.4, one research question and the first four hypotheses were formulated for objective one. As for objectives 2, 3, 4 and 5, different hypotheses were formulated.

1) What are the levels of writing achievement motivation, writing self-efficacy and writing anxiety of Iraqi EFL undergraduate students?

$H_{01}$: There is no significant difference in writing performance across the different levels (low, moderate and high) of writing achievement motivation.
$H_{02}$: There is no significant difference in writing performance across the different levels (low, moderate and high) of writing self-efficacy.

$H_{03}$: There is no significant difference in writing performance across the different levels (low, moderate and high) of facilitating writing anxiety.

$H_{04}$: There is no significant difference in writing performance across the different levels (low, moderate and high) of debilitating writing anxiety.

$H_{05}$: Writing self-efficacy does not mediate the relationship between writing achievement motivation and writing performance of Iraqi EFL undergraduate students.

$H_{05}$-$a$: There is no significant relationship between writing achievement motivation and writing performance.

$H_{05}$-$b$: There is no significant relationship between writing achievement motivation and writing self-efficacy.

$H_{05}$-$c$: There is no significant relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance.

$H_{06}$: Facilitating writing anxiety does not moderate the relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance of Iraqi EFL undergraduate students.

$H_{07}$: Debilitating writing anxiety does not moderate the relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance of Iraqi EFL undergraduate students.

$H_{08}$: There is no significant relationship between the set of the three dimensions of mastery-approach goal, performance-approach goal, facilitating writing anxiety, and writing performance.

$H_{09}$: There is no significant relationship between debilitating writing anxiety, and the set of the three dimensions of mastery-approach goal, performance-approach goal and facilitating writing anxiety.

$H_{010}$: There is no significant relationship between performance-avoidance goal, and the set of the three dimensions of mastery-approach goal, performance-approach goal and facilitating writing anxiety.

$H_{011}$: There is no significant relationship between performance-avoidance goal and debilitating writing anxiety.

$H_{012}$: There is no significant relationship between the set of two dimensions of performance-avoidance goal and debilitating writing anxiety, and writing performance.

## 1.6    Scope of the Study

This research examines only the effect of some affective variables, namely, anxiety, self-efficacy and achievement motivation on writing performance of Iraqi EFL learners. The study also focuses on the EFL context, whereby Iraqi freshman undergraduate students from two Iraqi public universities in Iraq were included as the sample of the study.

In addition, all the constructs of the study were concerned with the EFL writing performance of Iraqi EFL students. Although the literature has indicated numerous other variables that may also affect learners' writing skills such as language competence, self-concept, attitudes, these were not examined in the present study.

## 1.7      Significance of the Study

The study will contribute to the expansion of the literature of EFL writing; it would provide further understanding of how affective variables such as self-efficacy, achievement motivation and anxiety could enhance or affect EFL writing performance. Furthermore, this study is one of the first attempts to embrace the two roles of mediator and moderator simultaneously in a study in the area of foreign language writing.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this study is one of the first attempts to include four variables, namely writing achievement motivation, writing self-efficacy, writing anxiety and EFL writing performance simultaneously in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) writing. Thus, it is hoped that this study would give new insights into how these aforementioned variables might affect or enhance EFL writing processes. The findings may also be beneficial to EFL teachers, particularly, on the use of appropriate pedagogical intervention to increase learners' EFL writing ability, with a focus on learners' self-efficacy, self-confidence and motivation. Besides, this research emphasizes the integration of three theories namely, affective filter hypothesis, social cognitive theory and achievement goal theory, which provide the foundation of this study. It would be interesting to discover the findings of this study in light of the aforementioned theories.

## 1.8      Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the study comprises three theories, dubbed the affective filter hypothesis, social cognitive theory and achievement goal theory. These three theories underlie the present study.

Self-efficacy is a "belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1997, p. 391). Higher level of self-efficacy elevates human achievement level and personal well-being in different conditions (Bandura, 1997). Individuals who have high confidence about their capabilities strive to accomplish a demanding task with the purpose of mastery instead of avoid it. When high efficacious individuals experienced great frustrations, they would attribute their failures to inadequate endeavors or lack of knowledge and strive to overcome obstacles. Conversely, when individuals are in doubt about their capabilities, they may not be able to achieve their goals, or rather, they could make an effort to avoid them. In the case of low efficacious individuals experienced great frustrations, they would ascribe their failures to their ability or the task itself, and thus they could be anxious and would not pay enough efforts to achieve their goals. Such

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reactions can lessen self-efficacy and provoke debilitating anxiety that help ensure an inadequate performance. Some academics shared the same notion that a low level of self-efficacy is associated with debilitating anxiety (Erkan & Saban, 2011; Pajares & Valiante, 2008).

To have good picture of self-efficacy and writing performance, it is necessary to explain framework of Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory (SCT) as it is a crucial personal factor in social cognitive theory, which is an essential component or the key emotional element of the theory (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016). The focus of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) is on the dynamically triadic and reciprocal interaction between three factors, a) personal factor (self-efficacy beliefs), b) environment factor (Social Structures, Family Structures, educational Structures, e.g. teachers, peers, syllabus, contexts) and c) behavior factor (academic achievement, i.e. writing performance). Social cognitive theory posits that environment, personal factor and one's behavior influence each other.

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) posits that learning process for a student is as a result of reciprocal interactions between the three aforementioned factors. In accordance with this theory, learners make an effort to effectively accomplish a given task if they believe in their abilities along with the help of the environment factor to shape a great and pleasant atmosphere that steer the learners to show good behavior (good performance).

The three factors (i.e., personal, environment and behavior) do not possess equivalent strength in learners' performance, nor do these factors all occur simultaneously (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Learners' performance (i.e., behavior factor), for example, is influenced by how the learners themselves are affected by self-efficacy beliefs (personal factor) and then by family members, friends, classmates (environment factor). Specifically, human learning is more or less a result of the interaction between ones' behavior, environmental influences and personal factors. In other words, the behavior (academic achievement or performance) of a learner is influenced by the personal factors and environmental influences.

The second theory underlying this study is Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis (AFH). To have good communication in the foreign/second language requires foreign/second language learning (Baker & MacIntyre, 2003). Nonetheless, the complexities during the process of learning a foreign/second language could elicit language anxiety for ESL/EFL learners. Accordingt to Sparks et al. (2000), individuals' anxiety about foreign/second language learning seems to be a major obstacle during the learning process in the ESL/EFL context.

Anxiety can be described into types: facilitative (positive anxiety) and debilitative (negative anxiety). The former leads to positive achievement while the latter leads to negative achievement. In the AFH theory, filter is up when students have high levels of debilitating anxiety that might prevent the delivery of input to the Language

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Acquisition Device (LAD) and may result in hindering individual's comprehension and achievement (negative Output). On the contrary, filter is down when students have high levels of facilitating anxiety that could facilitate the process of individual's comprehension and achievement (positive Output).

Krashen (1982) asserts that the anxiety variable can be controlled by an affective-filter through the process of acquiring a second/foreign language. The AFH represents the view of Krashen that some affective variables do not play a causal role, yet a facilitative one in second language acquisition. Some of these affective variables are anxiety, self-confidence and motivation. On the one hand, Krashen contends that individuals who have high levels of motivation, self-confidence and low levels of debilitating anxiety might be better armed for success in the context of second language acquisition. On the other hand, Schütz (2007) claims that low levels of motivation, self-confidence and high rates of debilitating anxiety seem to elevate the affective filter level and create a mental block which results in the prevention of comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. In other words, the filter might hinder language acquisition when it is 'up' and vice versa.

The final theory addressed in this study is Achievement Goal Theory (AGT) which focuses on why learners are motivated (Dweck, 1986). The theory specifies "the kinds of goals (purposes or reasons) that direct achievement-related behaviors" (Maehr & Zusho, 2009, p. 77).

Initially, this theory had two basic goals, which were traditionally labelled as mastery-approach goal and performance-approach goal. The former focuses on the development of competence while the latter focuses on the demonstration of competence (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliot & Church, 1997; Senko, 2016). Mastery-approach goal, often allied with a belief that ability is resilient and enhanced with effort that an individual expends, indicates a strong desire to grow and learn, whereas performance-approach goal aims to inform others that an individual is able to outperform other learners, i.e., attaining the highest grade with minimal effort.

These two goals are often associated with adaptive patterns or orientations toward a task whereby individuals regard the errors they make as a normal thing during learning process, attempting to find new strategies to overcome setbacks, and looking for outside help (Dweck, 1986; Elliot & Church, 1997; Senko, 2016). Also, some scholars have shared the same notion that adaptive outcomes are often associated with positive attitudes, self-concept, and effort (Midgley, Kaplan & Middleton, 2001). In other words, it can be said that the adaptive (mastery-oriented) patterns are characterized by challenge seeking and high, effective persistence in the face of obstacles. Individuals who display this pattern seem to enjoy exerting effort in the pursuit of task mastery (Dweck, 1986).

Performance-avoidance goal is the third goal incorporated into the two aforementioned goals. This goal is adopted by a student in case of inability to perform

a given task and tries to avoid performing it. Rather, learners make an effort to avoid being outperformed as well as to avoid giving the impression that they are incompetent. Adoption of this goal refers to almost unequivocal evidence that this goal is inimical to learning (Wentzel, Wigfield & Miele, 2009). Maehr and Zusho (2009), for instance, reported that performance-avoidance goal is often hostile to most crucial learning outcomes. To a certain degree, performance-avoidance goal orientation leads to negative academic effects because there is interruption in the full participation in the learning process. The interruption may be due to the attention being diverted to competition with others, low ability perception, and demonstration of avoidance behavior. Also, this goal is related to other affective variables such as anxiety. This view is endorsed by Senko (2016), who affirmed that performance-avoidance goal does provoke high anxiety and can also undermine learners' academic achievement. Besides that, performance-avoidance goal is associated with maladaptive patterns/orientations toward a task.

The maladaptive patterns/orientations are described by Senko (2016) as "lacking confidence; interpreting exertion or errors as evidence of inability, feeling anxious and self-consciousness, withdrawing effort, avoiding challenge, and so forth, all ultimately undermining the quality of their learning" (p. 76). In other words, the maladaptive (helpless) patterns are characterized by challenge avoidance and low persistence in the face of difficulty. Individuals who show this pattern tend to evidence negative affect (such as anxiety) and negative self-cognitions when they confront obstacles (Dweck, 1986; Midgley et al., 2001; Wentzel et al., 2009). It can be said that performance-avoidance goal is adopted when a learner has debilitating anxiety, low levels of self-efficacy beliefs and negative attitudes. Figure 1.1 shows a clear picture of the theoretical framework based on the three aforementioned theories.
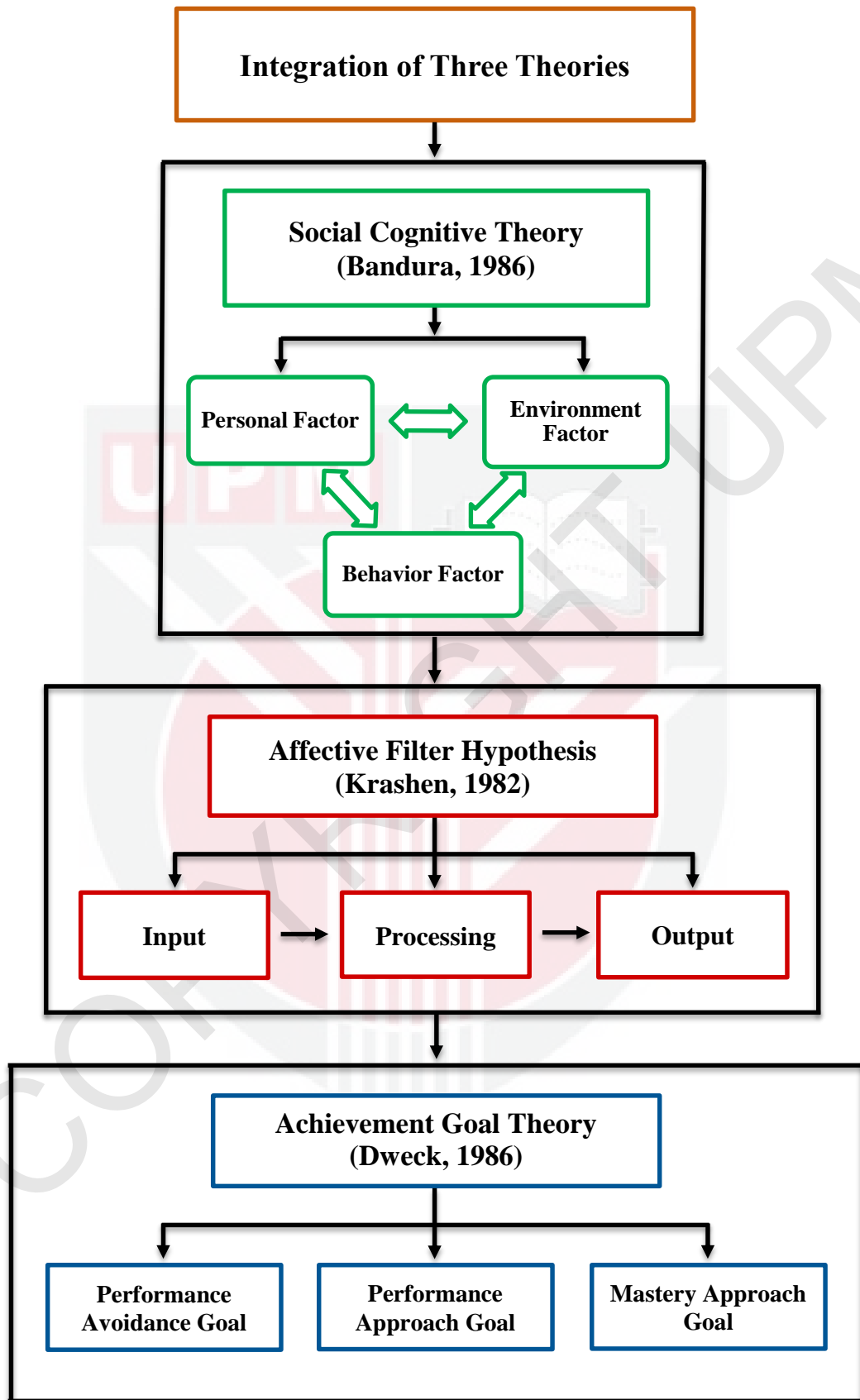
**Figure 1.1 : Theoretical Framework**

The flowchart contains the following elements:

- **Integration of Three Theories**
- **Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986)**
  - Personal Factor ↔ Environment Factor
  - Behavior Factor
- **Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982)**
  - Input → Processing → Output
- **Achievement Goal Theory (Dweck, 1986)**
  - Performance Avoidance Goal
  - Performance Approach Goal
  - Mastery Approach Goal

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## 1.9        The Conceptual Model of the Study

The proposed model is developed based on the theoretical supports and empirical studies related to the variables of this model. This model consists of the three latent variables; writing anxiety (WA), writing self-efficacy (WSE), and writing achievement motivation (WAM) and their effects on the writing performance of the students (WP). The writing anxiety variable consists of two dimensions represented by facilitating anxiety (FAC) and debilitating anxiety (DEB). Writing achievement motivation variable is constituted of three dimensions, which includes *mastery-approach goal (MAS.M)*, *performance-approach goal (APP.M)*, and *performance-avoidance goal (AVO.M)*. On the other hand, five dimensions including *general progress (GPR)*, *specific progress (SPR)*, *observational comparison (OC)*, *social feedback (SF)* and *physiological states (PS)* constitute the writing self-efficacy variable.

Achievement motivation is a significant and positive factor for a learner's academic performance. Elliot and Church (1997) pointed out that achievement motivation is often associated positively with individuals' academic performances. This view is endorsed by a study conducted by Emmanuel et al. (2014) who examined high school students in Ghana, which revealed that achievement motivation has a significant and positive impact on academic performance. It can be said that achievement motivation is deemed as a dynamic and powerful predictor of an individual's performance and could lead them to behave in a particular way to accomplish their particular goals and purposes.

As highlighted earlier in the background to the study that achievement motivation is positively associated with self-efficacy which is also deemed a powerful predictor for a learner's performance in various fields such as sports, education, and business (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy means a learner's "capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). In turn, self-efficacy beliefs enable individuals to estimate the amount of time and effort required to successfully complete a given task or gain a required skill (Yusuf, 2011). Thus, it can be said that self-efficacy could greatly encourage students to have plans and set up their higher goals while the lower levels of the sense of self-efficacy may result in setting up lower goals to begin with. Furthermore, all the aspects starting from taking up difficult challenges and including hard-work, motivation, and perseverance in confronting obstacles and setbacks are positively linked with higher levels of self-efficacy (Pajares, 2003; Sanders-Reio, 2010).

Self-efficacy has been shown to facilitate other variables such as achievement motivation and academic performances (Bandura, 1997). Yusuf (2010) also supports this notion that "achievement motivation and self-regulated learning strategies were facilitated by self-efficacy" (p. 9). It can be said that self-efficacy can bolster individuals' confidence, achievement motivation and can also enhance their achievement. In addition, self-efficacy has played a mediational role in different disciplines and with writing skill in particular. Pajares (2003) endorsed this view that

writing self-efficacy is a significant predictor of individuals' writing outcomes and can also play the mediating role as social cognitive theorists indicated. Thus, it can be said that a relationship between two correlated variables can be mediated by self-efficacy. Based on this, writing self-efficacy in the present study is examnied a mediational variable in the relationship between writing achievement motivation and EFL writing performance of Iraqi undergraduate students.

Self-efficacy is related negatively with other factors such as anxiety (Pajares & Valiante, 2008; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016). Thus, learners with higher levels of self-efficacy could suffer less from anxiety (Bandura, 1997; Sanders-Reio, 2010; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016). Self-efficacy has relationship with writing performance by applying the social cognitive theory as explored by a significant number of educational academics (Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Valiante, 2008; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016; Schunk & Pajares, 2009). According to these academics, higher levels of self-efficacy are positively associated with writing performance, but negatively associated with anxiety. Consequently, students with high level of writing self-efficacy write better than their counterparts having low writing self-efficacy and debilitating anxiety.

Most studies have documented that anxiety affects both variables: self-efficacy and writing performance (Jebreil et al., 2015; Liu, 2006; Tsao et al., 2017; Yan et al., 2018). On the other hand, few studies have revealed a positive relationship between anxiety and performance. It was found that the more anxious learners showed better performance (Abu Shawish & Atea, 2010; Bailey, Onwuegbuzie & Daley, 2000; Park & French, 2013; Singh & Rajalingam, 2012). Besides, it was also found that writing anxiety is positively associated with self-efficacy (Csizér & Piniel, 2013; Salem & Al Dyiar, 2014). Based on this, anxiety can be utilized in this study as facilitative and debilitative scales. Added to this, previous research recorded that anxiety has been used as a moderating variable in different disciplines such as Clinical Psychology (Hatfield & Dula, 2014); Economics and Business (Vlachos et al., 2010); Hospitality and Tourism (Yang & Forney, 2013). Thus, anxiety can, in turn, play a moderating variable in a relationship between two correlated variables.

With regard to the present study, the writing anxiety is examined a moderating variable placed in the relationship between writing self-efficacy and EFL writing performance. One of the moderating functions is either to foster a relationship or to debilitate it. Hence, the relationship between writing self-efficacy and EFL writing may be fostered or debilitated by writing anxiety. Figure 1.3 illustrates the developed conceptual model of writing self-efficacy variable as a mediator and writing anxiety variable as a moderator.
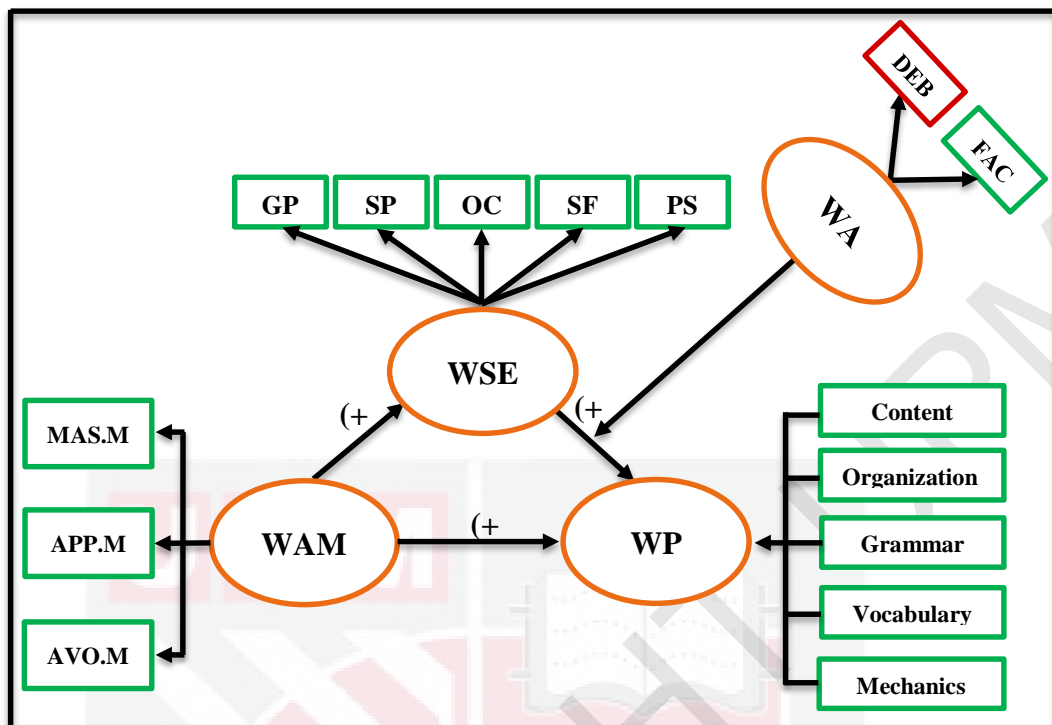
- WAM = writing achievement motivation; MAS.M = Mastery-approach goal; APP.M = performance approach goal
- AVO.M= performance avoidance goal;
- WA= writing anxiety; FAC= facilitating writing anxiety; DEB= debilitating writing anxiety; WP= writing performance;
- WSE= writing self-efficacy; GPR= general progress; SPR= specific progress; OC= observational comparison;
- SF= social feedback; PS= physiological states

**Figure 1.2 : The Conceptual Model of the Study**

In this model, the causality and impact of the relationships between the variables are indicated by the one-way arrows. First, it is shown in the figure that writing performance of the Iraqi undergraduate students may be influenced by writing achievement motivation (WAM) as indicated by the one-way arrow (path diagram) between the two variables. Second, writing self-efficacy (WSE) variable in the above Figure is examined as a mediator variable in the relationship between writing achievement motivation and writing performance. Third, the writing anxiety (WA) variable is examined as a moderator in the relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance. In addition, as explained earlier (p. 26) the diemsnions of the writing anxiety, namely facilitating anxiety (FAC) and debilitating anxiety (DEB), and achievement motivation, namely mastery-appraoch goal (MAS.M), performance -appraoch goal (APP.M) and avoidance-appraoch goal (AVO.M) are also examined which are related to objective five.

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## 1.10    Operational Definition of Terms

This section provides the definitions and/or operational definitions of the main terms used in this study.

**Writing self-efficacy** denotes beliefs of individuals in their abilities to fulfill writing tasks efficatively. In this study, writing self-efficacy is measured by a questionnaire adopted from (Bottomley, Henk & Melnick, 1998), which consists of five dimensions, namely (*General Progress, Specific Progress, Observational Comparison, Social Feedback* and *Physiological States*).

**Achievement Motivation** is defined as the purpose of task engagement (Elliot & Church, 1997). Also, it is defined as individuals' reason or desire to participate in a new learning task (Senko, 2016). In this study, achievement motivation is measured by a questionnaire adapted from (Elliot & Church, 1997) which includes three dimensions or goals *(Mastery-approach Goals, Performance-approach Goals* and *Performance-avoidance Goals)*.

**Writing Anxiety** is a psychological condition in which a learner experiences during a writing test/exam. Writing anxiety has been identified as either a facilitative variable that stimulates and encourages a learner, or a debilitative variable that prevents or obstructs a learner from achieving his objectives (Aida, 1994). In this study, writing anxiety is measured by a questionnaire adapted from (Cheng, 2004), which consists of two dimensions, namely (debilitating writing anxiety and facilitating writing anxiety).

**Debilitating Writing Anxiety** is defined as a situational aspect, which refers to the feelings of worries accompanied by reactions as in excessive sweating, pounding of the heart, and negative expectations as well as maladaptive behaviors of a learner's experience while performing a particular writing task at a given time and place.

**Facilitating Writing Anxiety** is a positive anxiety that encourages an individual to challenge a given learning task that requires an individual to emotionally adopt the approach behavior (Valmori, 2016). Thus, high levels of facilitating anxiety may permit the delivery of input to the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) which result in simplifying one's comprehension and leading to a good writing performance (positive Output).

**EFL Writing performance** is an intermediate proficiency level represented by freshman students at university level to write a structured, well-organized essay (descriptive) to develop their ideas in distinct fourth paragraphs using correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation (Nicolaidou, 2010). The task is evaluated based on their overall writing performance as measured by the adapted writing composition scale of Jacobs et al. (1981) by Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1992).

**English as a foreign language (EFL)** refers to the language used by non-native speakers of English in the context where English is rarely used. In this study, Iraqi has an EFL context and the students who participated.

**Mediator** is a third variable which explains a relationship between two correlated variables in that it accounts for how or why a relationship between two variables exists (Hair et al., 2017). In this study, self-efficacy is axamined as a medaitor variable in the relationship between achievement motivation and writing performance.

**Moderator** is an independent variable that can directly change the strength or even the direction of a relationship between two correlated variables (Hair et al., 2017). In this study, anxiety is axamined as a moderator variable in the relationship between self-efficacy and writing performance.

## 1.11     Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter One sheds light on the background of the study, problem statement, objectives, research question, hypotheses and significance of the study. Besides, scope of the study, theoretical and conceptual of the study and operational definitions of terms are also presented in chapter one. Chapter Two provides a detailed theoretical discussion, an overview of the main variables of the study and the review of previous researches which are related to writing, writing anxiety, writing self-efficacy and writing achievement motivation. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology which provides an explanation on the research approach and design. In this chapter, the focus is on the primary research instruments and procedures used in the collection and analysis of data as well as the pilot study. The findings of the study are discussed in Chapter Four. Finally, Chapter Five presents the main findings, implications, significant contributions and limitations of the study and offers some recommendations for further research.

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# LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

## Journals

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