

INVESTIGATING WRITING DIFFICULTY AMONG ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF MASTER ONE STUDENTS AT THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE- UNIVERSITY OF GHARDAIA

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to investigate the writing difficulty and its causes among Master One students when engaging in academic writing and how they overcome this difficulty that hinders their writing improvement. 47 students in the Department of English Language at University of Ghardaia took part in this study. To this end, a mixed method approach was adopted combining both quantitative and qualitative analyses, and a structured questionnaire was distributed to forty-seven Master one students and analysed using an SPSS software. It consisted of twelve closed-ended questions ranged between Yes/No questions (2), frequency scale questions such as “Always, Often, Sometimes, Never” (2) and checklist type multiple choice questions (8). The obtained findings revealed that the students, in the main, read and write insufficiently, lack conceptual mastery of the subject matter and specialised vocabulary and are unaware of the importance of using writing strategies. The findings confirmed the hypothesis that the writing difficulty and its causes are due to the lack of reading and writing besides the lack of subject matter mastery, specialised vocabulary and writing strategies. Finally, some recommendations were suggested.

Keywords: academic writing, writing difficulty, reading, vocabulary, process, strategies

Introduction

In traditional classes, teachers relate their work to the syllabus covering and teach writing based on studying model texts and practising language points, which impacts negatively the students' writing skill since students may not have the opportunity to be corrected. Hedge (2000) stated the following:

As a result of various pressures of time and the need to cover the syllabus, writing is often relegated to homework and takes place in unsupported conditions of learning. The danger circumstances is that poorer writers struggle alone and the experience confirms them in their perception of themselves as failing writers. And better writers miss valuable opportunities for improvement through discussion, collaboration, and feedback (p. 301).

It is obvious that a traditional approach to writing does not yield good results, and this situation calls for selecting an approach that develops and fosters the students' writing skill.

In a contemporary writing classroom, the students not only discuss model texts and practise language points but also engage in the process of writing in class. That is, they learn to write through writing. According to researchers in the field of writing, the students' writing improves through discussion, collaboration and feedback. Besides, students should be engaged in the creation of contextualised pieces of communication. Moreover, they should have control on their writing task; in other words, they have to plan, draft, read, revise and edit their pieces of writing for accuracy. Moreover, writing in class gives the opportunity to the teacher and other students to correct each other through questioning, prompting, supporting and providing ideas and language which assist the student writers to be clear, better organised and more accessible to readers (the other students). Last but not least, the focus must be on the ideas and how they are organised within a piece of writing before checking spelling, punctuation and grammar accuracy.

Significance of the study

This study is very important for both teachers and students of English as it unveils the challenges and difficulties Master One students encounter in writing in English in general and in academic writing in particular. The obtained findings will help teachers understand where the problems may lie and what solutions can be suggested to solve this problem.

Research Question

What are the factors causing writing difficulty among Master One students at the Department of English Language, University of Ghardaia?

Hypothesis

The lack of reading, content and vocabulary knowledge, practising writing and using writing strategies are the main causes of writing difficulty among Master One students at the Department of English Language, University of Ghardaia.

Literature Review

In the 1970s, researchers became interested in what second language writers do during writing in order to get an appropriate piece of writing. They come to a conclusion that any piece of writing is the outcome of a number of cognitive steps. This has been reached through a number of research methods such as observation, audio and video recording, think aloud protocols, interviews, and the like. For example, Zamel (1983 in Hedge, 2000) studied the composing processes of some advanced ESL students. The study took place when those six students were preparing formal papers based on expository rhetorical pattern of organisation. Her research sought the following questions:

- How do writers write?
- How do their ideas seem to be generated?
- What happens to these ideas after they are recorded? To what extent do these writers attend to the development and clarification of these ideas?
- To what extent and at what point during the process do they deal with more mechanical matters? (Zamel, *ibid*, p. 169).

She obtained the following findings:

- Planning is a thinking activity that writers use and go back to it during the composing process,
- The writers used individual strategies as some of them wrote notes or diagrams or lists; others (better writers) did not write anything until they began the essay, while all of them spent time for thinking at the beginning.
- Students re-read and assessed their work, Besides, they reacted and moved on. Nonetheless, better writers re-read larger chunks of discourse, while poorer ones sometimes re-read smaller chunks or whole paragraphs.
- Revision took place during the writing process. Writers, for example, wrote something new, deleted sentences and shifted paragraphs around and sometimes removed them.
- All of the writers considered surface level features; nonetheless, the better writers dealt with those features at the end of composing. Moreover, it has been noticed that poorer writers kept on changing words and phrases during the whole process.
- Linguistic problems were dealt with differently, Better writers used a number of strategies. For example, they left blanks or wrote down words in their first language so as to stay focused on developing ideas. The last strategy was editing. After they had written and developed their ideas, began to recheck grammar, spelling and word choice besides punctuation.

Those findings were confirmed by Raimes (1985 in Hedge, 2000). She used think-aloud protocols to research the composing process. She, first, suggested that "poor composing sentence can be a greater factor" in lack of competence in writing rather than poor language competence. She wrote the following comment, on "experienced writers":

- They consider purpose and audience.

- They consult their own background knowledge.
- They let ideas incubate,
- They plan.
- They read over what they have written as they write.
- They do not follow the sequence of planning, organising, writing and revising.
- The process that produces the piece of writing is not linear though the piece of writing is linear.

As a conclusion, the writing process requires the writing steps of planning, drafting and revising besides the writers' individual strategies. However, Raimes's study was criticised by Cooper and Holtzman (1983) and Dobrin (1994) in two main points (in Hedge, *ibid*). The first criticism indicated that writers are not sufficiently aware of their own cognitive processes, for these are complex and diffuse and entail both visual and verbal elements. The second criticism lies in the fact that focusing on cognitive processes affects the writer's behaviour and more precisely, it distorts them. This is to claim that protocols are incomplete and do not generate enough data to facilitate inferring cognitive processes. In contrast, other researchers proved that protocols can furnish very rich data and allow the writer to consider many possibilities and can find out processes that are hidden when using other ways.

Activities Characterising the writing Process

Some call them strategies and others such as Hedge (2000) refer to them as activities. The following make the main steps in the writing process according to Hedge (*ibid*):

➤ Planning

Good writers focus on the overall meaning and the pattern of organisation of a text and begin planning. The latter consists of:

- considering the purpose of writing
- deciding on the pattern of organisation appropriate for the type of text and the readership

The time that planning takes depends on the type of the writing task. For example, an academic essay takes more time than a letter of application. Moreover, the style of the writer also plays a role in planning. According to the literature, some students who devote less time of thinking before writing produce effective writing. In fact, they tend to think during writing. Moreover, good writers set goals for the next unit of writing during the pauses they have while writing. This is to say that any kind of planning before writing is subject to review due to the emergence of new ideas and the writer evaluates them critically. Overall, a more flexible approach to planning is needed.

➤ Revising

As mentioned above, a good writer reflects on his writing during the thinking phases and re-read their sentences and have a look at the plan, and, of course, think about what to write in the following sentences. Then they make a review of the text and question themselves about the expressed ideas and the arguments they have provided, ... However, other studies indicated that some writers do not make any revision, while other ones begin with a stream of consciousness text then transform it into an organised essay (Faigley & Witte, 1981). The latter mentioned that revision depends on the writers' skills, the purpose of writing, the genre, the formality level and the degree of familiarity with the readership.

➤ Producing Reader-Based Prose

Good writers consider their readership and look for how to produce what is called reader-based prose. They think about what readers need to know and the way they make information clear besides the appropriate style whether it be formal, informal, etc. Therefore, the type of readers provides the context for writing that determines the content and style. Writing, in this sense, is social and interactive. In sum, as Koda (2004) stated, good texts are a collection of carefully structured sentences rather than jumbled ones.

In her turn, Hogue (2003) suggested the following steps in the writing process:

- creating which includes “choosing a topic” and “generating ideas” (prewriting: listing, clustering, ...)
- organising ideas (by making an outline)
- writing the rough draft (the first draft) without focusing on correcting grammar, punctuation or spelling
- polishing the piece of writing through “revising the content and organisation” and “editing for structure, grammar, punctuation, mechanics, spelling and word choice”

Seow (2002) named the writing process as a private classroom activity that includes the four basic writing stages:

- planning
- drafting (writing)
- revising (redrafting) and
- editing

besides three other stages imposed by the teacher on students:

- responding (sharing)
- evaluating and
- post-writing

➤ **Responding**

As suggested by Seow (ibid), “responding” to the students’ writing either by the teacher or by peers has a significant role in the successful incorporation of the writing process. Responding can be oral or in writing and intervenes between drafting and revising (Seow, 2002 & Ferris, 2003). It must not be left to the final stage as it happens in writing courses and lessons. Providing feedback is paramount in the writing process.

Nonetheless, Richards and Renandya (2002) stated that the writing difficulty lies not only in generating ideas and organising them, but in translating them in readable text, as well, and the difficulty becomes worse when learners’ language proficiency is weak.

Integrating Reading and Writing

Another line of research has studied the relationship between reading and writing and called for combining both skills in writing courses (Grabe & Zhang, 2016). As cited in El Kouti (2017), a number of researchers, such as Grabe (2001, 2003, 2009) and Carkin (2005), have called for skills integration for many decades in academic settings especially where the communicative approach is applied. The motive behind this trend in language teaching is that teaching separate skills does not yield good results whereas combining at least two skills for instance, reading and writing, will assist learners fulfill many learning outcomes (pp. 322-323).

Grabe and Zangh (ibid) claimed that in many cases, success in academic writing depends on reading input either directly from source texts, or indirectly from background knowledge. Furthermore, many researchers have tried to investigate how “reading and writing might reinforce or accelerate the learning content, the development of literacy skills, and the acquisition of language abilities” (Grabe, 2003, p. 242 Cited in El Kouti, 2017, p. 323).

Some of the writing tasks that are common in the university context are:

1. Summary writing (with related issues of plagiarism and paraphrasing)
2. Note taking
3. Reading guides as homework (in which students write down responses to questions)
4. Synthesis writing tasks (including in-class essay exams)
5. Critical response papers (often a brief summary followed by a critical analysis or a personal interpretation)
6. Essay questions in subject area courses (including take-home exams)

7. Research papers

(Grabe & Zangh, *ibid*, pp. 113-114)

From above and as noticed, integrating reading and writing yields good results.

Grabe and Stoller (2001) claimed that English academic curricula should be centered within an integrated skills framework. That is, the objectives of reading in academic settings are to perform further tasks related to content and language in connection with writing activities. As an example, the integration of EAP reading and writing can result in “summary writing, report writing, and outlining” (*ibid*, p. 200).

Vocabulary Knowledge

For Grabe and Stoller (*ibid*), the amount of vocabulary needed in second language academic reading exceeds 10,000 words (without counting inflectional suffixation distinctions). This means that fluent readers are required to know automatically at least 95 percent of vocabulary, viz., 300 words on a page. Other researchers such as Nation (2001) and Schmitt (2000) maintained that in academic settings, second language students need more than 2,000 most frequent word families, for they are very important in vocabulary instruction. The authors (2001) argued that second language learners can reach this amount of words through extensive reading. Nonetheless, vocabulary development cannot be attained by extensive reading only, but by exposing students to new words through explicit instruction, showing them how to learn words on their own, familiarising them with their own learning processes, and by making them word collectors (*ibid*).

Extensive Reading

Extensive reading is essential for academic expectations, performance and success. It is defined as “the practice of reading large amounts of text for extended periods of time” (Grabe and Stoller, 2001, p. 198) and should be central in any course. Reading extensively can yield greater comprehension and makes vocabulary easily acquired (Carlin, 2005). Therefore, extensive reading helps the reader to be a good one (*ibid*). Nevertheless, students favour reading books of interest to them (*ibid*). In this case, teachers in academic settings should encourage their students to read inside and outside the class (*ibid*). For reading inside the classroom, Day and Bamford (1998) pointed out that extensive reading requires at least a quarter of an hour daily. For reading outside the classroom, the authors recommend that students should be encouraged to take books home and read (*ibid*).

Research Methods

Procedures

In this study, a case study research design approach was employed to obtain insights from the respondents. According to Brown and Rogers (2002), a case study is one of the main ways that allow and enable researchers to gain insight in language learning settings. It is able to provide an in-depth analysis of a specific topic, offer deep and contextual understanding of complex issues, bridging theory with real-world practice by strengthening critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills in students. A case study allows researchers to explore unique phenomena and generate new insights through qualitative data from authentic scenarios.

Data Collection Instrument

In this study a questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. Questionnaires are important sources of information. According to Nunan (1992), “the questionnaire is a relatively popular means of collecting data. It enables the researcher to collect data in field settings, and the data such as free-form fieldnotes, participant observers’ journals, the transcripts of oral language” (p. 143 Cited in El Kouti, 2017, p. 187). The questions were closed ones and carefully worded. Closed-ended questions, according to Nunan (*ibid*) are easy to quantify and analyse particularly when a researcher uses computer statistics packages such as SPSS.

The questionnaire had two sections. Section A had one item that sought for the personal information of the respondents, the gender. Section B had twelve closed-ended questions about the students’ writing habit, writing activities, ... the language they write with, the writing genres, the

writing difficulties, the writing obstacles, the writing strategies and the overcoming of the writing difficulties.

The questionnaire employed twelve closed-ended questions. These were: Yes/No questions (2), frequency scale questions such as “Always, Often, Sometimes, Never” (2), Checklist type Multiple Choice Questions (8).

Data Analysis Technique

Analysis of data provided facts that enabled the interpretation of the results and also helped to reach conclusions from the findings of the study. Data collected using the questionnaires were coded, processed and analysed, with Statistical Package (Source: SPSS V27) for Windows. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages were used to analyse the data.

Findings and Discussions

Section A: Personal Information

Gender:

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by gender.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Male	13	28,3%
Female	33	71,7%
Total	46	100 %

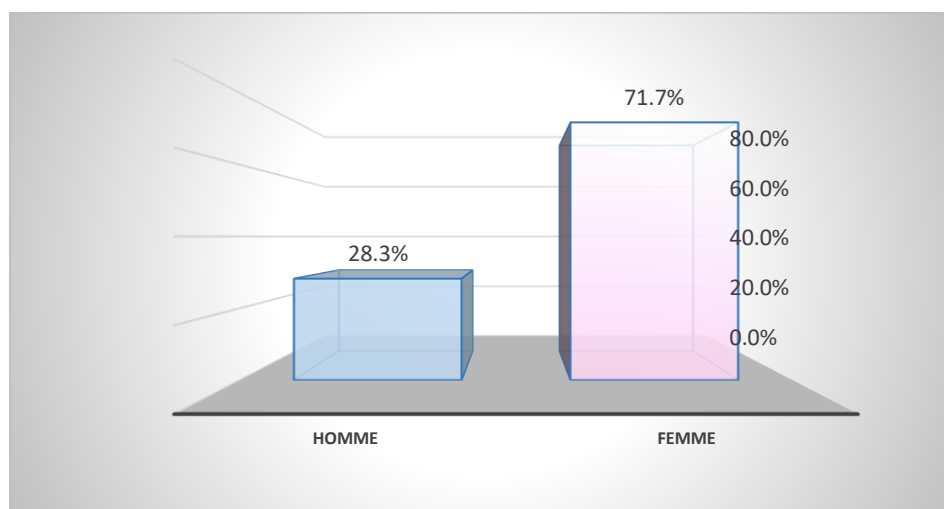


Figure 1 : Distribution of respondents by gender

The distribution of respondents by gender, as presented in Table 1 and Figure 1, indicates a clear predominance of female students, who represent 71,7% of the total sample, compared to only 28,3% of male students

Section B: Presentation and Discussion of Major Findings

1. Do you enjoy your studies at university?

Table 2: Enjoyment of University Studies

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	63,8%

No	17	36,2%
Total	47	100 %

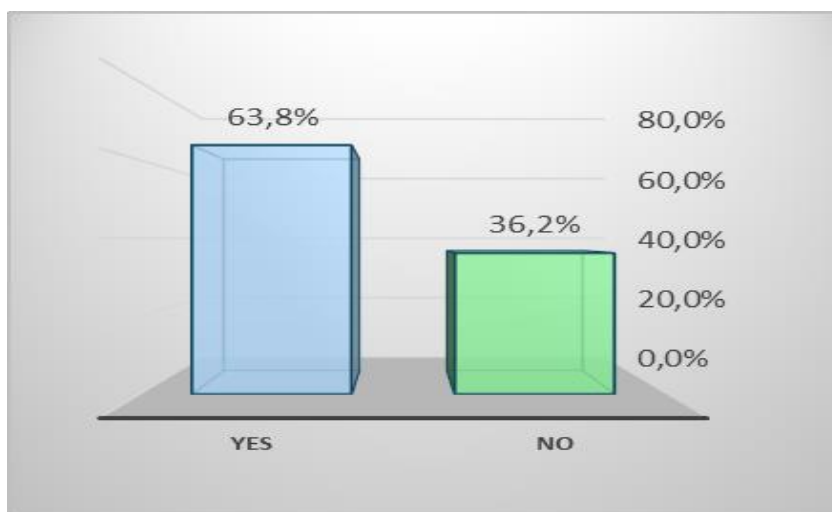


Figure 2 : Enjoyment of University Studies

The results presented in Table 2 and Figure 2 reveal that a majority of the respondents (63,8%) reported enjoying their university studies, whereas a considerable proportion (36,2%) expressed the opposite. This finding suggests that although most students maintain a positive attitude towards their academic environment, more than one-third of them demonstrate a lack of satisfaction or engagement, which could be an important factor influencing their academic performance and, more specifically, their ability to develop academic writing skills. The relatively high percentage of students who do not enjoy their studies highlights the necessity of exploring the underlying causes of this dissatisfaction, such as curriculum design, teaching methods, or personal motivation, as these elements may significantly hinder the acquisition and improvement of writing competence in their field of study.

2. Do you like writing?

Table 3: Students' Preference for Writing

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	40	88,9%
No	5	11,1%
Total	45	100 %

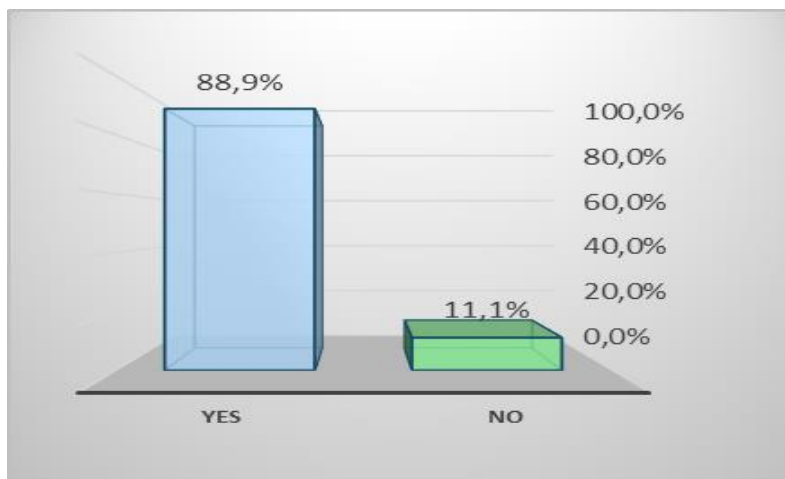


Figure 3: Students' Preference for Writing

The data in Table 3 and Figure 3 indicate that an overwhelming majority of students (88,9%) expressed a positive preference for writing, while only a small proportion (11,1%) reported a lack of interest in this activity. This strong inclination towards writing suggests that students generally recognise its importance as part of their academic journey and may be motivated to engage in writing practices. However, the minority who dislike writing cannot be overlooked, as their negative attitudes may stem from difficulties or challenges related to linguistic competence, confidence, or instructional approaches. Such disparities in students' perceptions of writing highlight the need for targeted pedagogical strategies that foster motivation and address the barriers experienced by those less enthusiastic, in order to ensure that all learners can develop their academic writing skill effectively.

3. In which language do you write?

Table 4: Languages Used in Writing

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Arabic	29	39,2%
French	7	9,5%
English	34	45,9%
Other	4	5,4%
Total	74	100 %

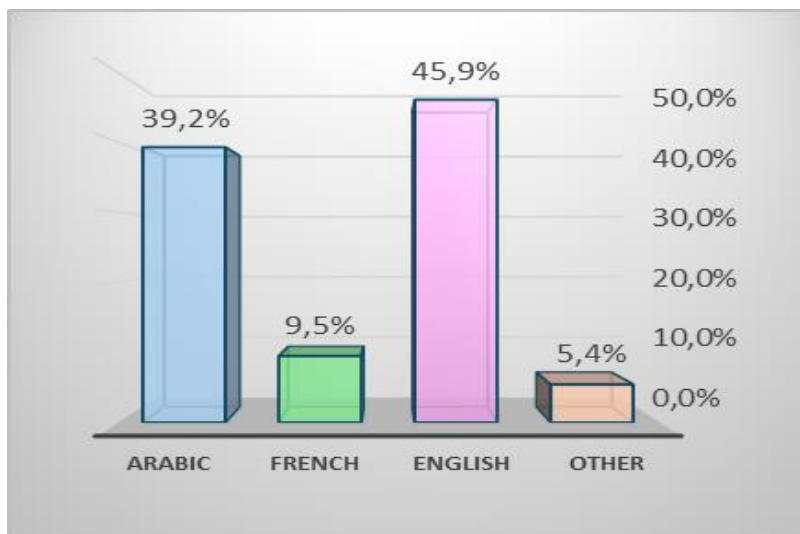


Figure 4: Languages Used in Writing

The findings presented in Table 4 and Figure 4 reveal a clear preference among students for writing in English (45,9%) and Arabic (39,2%), with French (9,5%) and other languages (5,4%) being less frequently used. This distribution suggests that English occupies a dominant position in students' writing practices, possibly due to its role as the primary language of academic and scientific communication, while Arabic remains significant given its status as the native and national language. The relatively low proportion of French usage may reflect a decline in its relevance within the academic environment, despite its historical and educational presence. These results highlight the multilingual context in which students operate, but also point to potential challenges in developing academic writing skills, as students may lack consistent exposure and mastery in one dominant academic language. Consequently, the coexistence of multiple languages could contribute to the difficulties observed in acquiring and consolidating academic writing proficiency.

4. What do you generally write in Arabic?

Table 5: Types of Writings in Arabic

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Poems	6	16,2%
Novels	6	16,2%
Short stories	19	51,4%
Articles	6	16,2%
Other	0	0,0%
Total	37	100 %

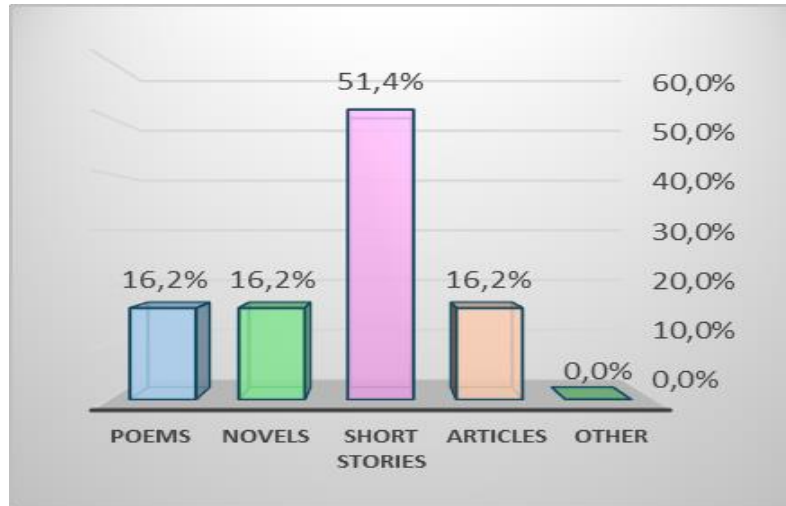


Figure 5: Types of Writings in Arabic

The results displayed in Table 5 and Figure 5 show that the majority of students who write in Arabic tend to produce short stories (51,4%), while smaller but equal proportions of them engage in writing poems (16,2%), novels (16,2%), and articles (16,2%). This suggests that creative writing, particularly short stories, represents the most common form of expression in Arabic among students. The relatively balanced distribution across the other categories highlights that Arabic writing practices are largely oriented toward literary and personal expression rather than academic or scientific purposes. The absence of responses under the “Other” category further indicates that students’ writing in Arabic is concentrated within traditional genres. These findings may partly explain the difficulties students encounter in developing academic writing skills, as their Arabic writing experience seems to be shaped by creativity and narrative forms rather than structured and formal academic discourse.

5. What writing activities are you doing in your speciality?

Table 6: Writing Activities in Students’ Speciality

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Paragraphs	26	38,8%
Essays	31	46,3%
Exposes	10	14,9%
Other	0	0,0%
Total	67	100 %

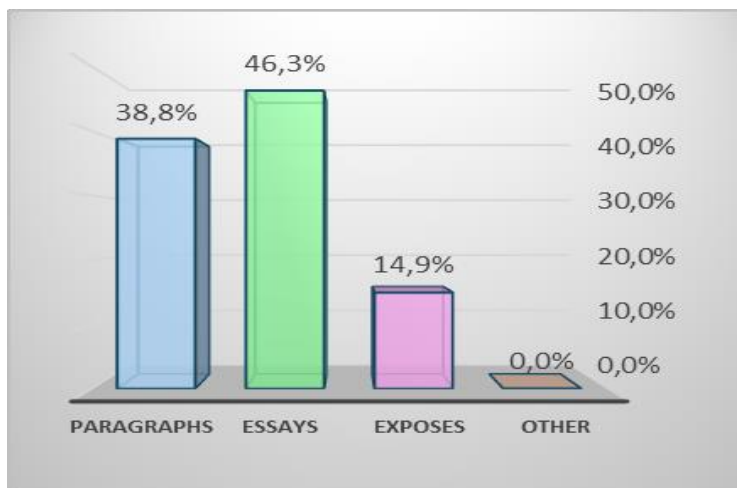


Figure 6: Writing Activities in Students' Speciality

The findings in Table 6 and Figure 6 indicate that essays constitute the most frequent type of writing activity within students' speciality (46,3%), followed by paragraphs (38,8%), while exposés are practiced much less frequently (14,9%). The absence of responses in the "Other" category suggests that students' writing practices in their field are relatively limited to these traditional forms. This distribution highlights that while students are regularly exposed to academic writing tasks such as essays and paragraphs, the range of activities may not be sufficiently diverse to foster the development of advanced academic writing skills. In particular, the limited practice of exposés, which often require critical thinking, synthesis, and structured argumentation, might restrict students' ability to strengthen essential academic competencies. Consequently, although students engage in core writing activities, the lack of variety and depth in these practices could be one of the factors contributing to their difficulties in mastering academic writing in their speciality.

6. Writing in class:

Table 7: Frequency of Writing in Class

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Always	14	31,1%
Often	12	26,7%
Sometimes	19	42,2%
Never	0	0,0%
Total	45	100 %

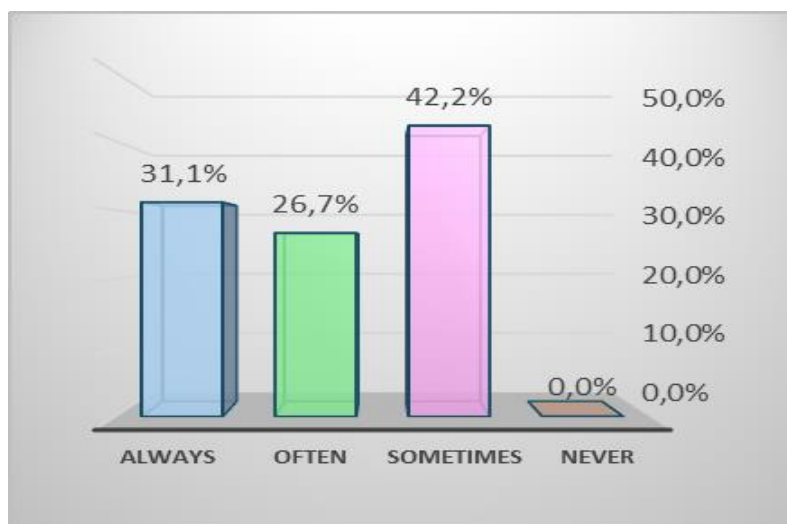


Figure 7: Frequency of Writing in Class

The data in Table 7 and Figure 7 reveal that writing activities in class are not consistently practiced, as only 31,1% of students reported that they “always” write in class, while 26,7% indicated “often” and the largest proportion, 42,2%, stated “sometimes.” Notably, none of the students reported “never,” which suggests that writing does occur, but with irregular frequency. This irregularity may contribute to students’ difficulties in developing academic writing proficiency, as regular and structured in-class writing practice is essential for reinforcing skills and receiving timely feedback from instructors. The predominance of the “sometimes” category highlights a lack of systematic integration of writing into classroom activities, which may limit students’ opportunities to internalise writing strategies and gradually improve their academic performance.

7. How often do teachers give you assignments?

Table 8: Frequency of Assignments Given by Teachers

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Always	21	44,7%
Often	15	31,9%
Sometimes	11	23,4%
Never	0	0,0%
Total	47	100 %

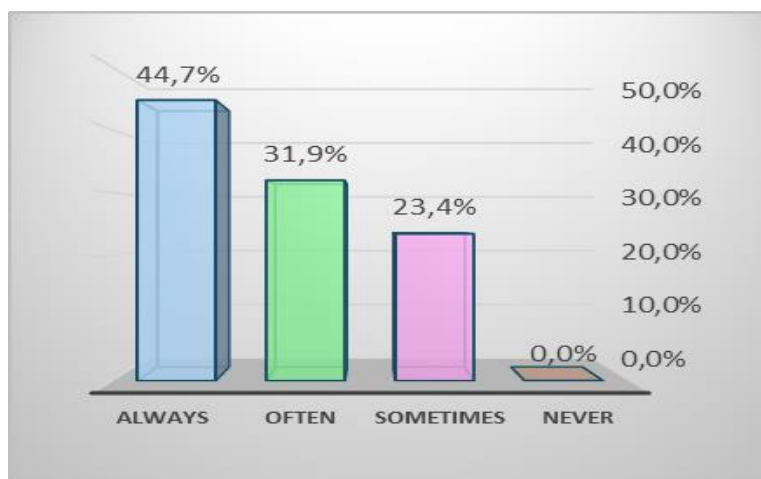


Figure 8: Frequency of Assignments Given by Teachers

The results presented in Table 8 and Figure 8 show that a considerable proportion of students receive assignments regularly, with 44,7% indicating “always” and 31,9% “often,” while only 23,4% reported “sometimes.” None of the respondents selected “never,” which suggests that assignments are a consistent part of the learning process. This trend indicates that teachers do provide students with relatively frequent opportunities to practice writing outside the classroom, a practice that is crucial for developing writing skills. However, while the frequency of assignments appears adequate, the persistence of difficulties in academic writing among students may point to issues related not to the quantity but to the quality, diversity, and pedagogical follow-up of these assignments. Without adequate feedback and guidance, assignments risk becoming mechanical exercises rather than meaningful opportunities for skill development, thereby limiting their potential to foster academic writing competence.

8. What are the difficulties that you usually face in writing in your speciality?

Table 9: Difficulties in Writing Skill within Speciality

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of appropriate vocabulary	30	46,2%
Lack of grammar knowledge	10	15,4%
Lack of content knowledge	18	27,7%
Other	7	10,8%
Total	65	100 %

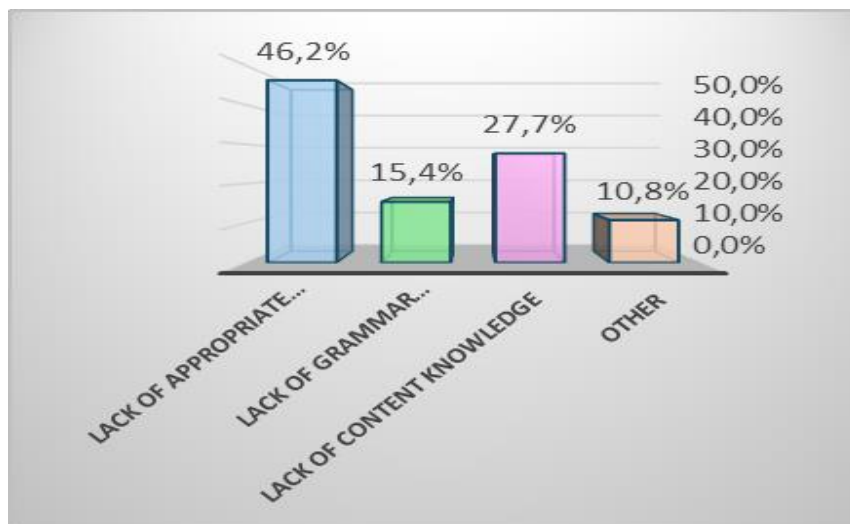


Figure 9: Difficulties in Writing Skill within Speciality

The findings in Table 9 and Figure 9 reveal that the most pressing difficulty faced by students in developing their writing skills within their speciality is the lack of appropriate vocabulary (46,2%), followed by insufficient content knowledge (27,7%) and limited grammar knowledge (15,4%). A smaller percentage (10,8%) reported other difficulties. These results suggest that lexical gaps constitute the primary barrier preventing students from expressing complex academic ideas with precision and coherence. While grammar and content also play significant roles, the dominance of vocabulary-related issues highlights that students often struggle to access the academic register required in their field of study. This lack of lexical and conceptual mastery not only reduces their ability to write effectively but also affects their confidence and motivation to engage in writing tasks. Consequently, these linguistic and cognitive deficiencies emerge as key factors that hinder the successful development of academic writing competence in the students' speciality.

9. What are the causes of these difficulties?

Table 10: Causes of Writing Difficulties

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of vocabulary knowledge	26	33,3%
Lack of interest	11	14,1%
Reading	22	28,2%
Linguistic deficiency	9	11,5%
Absences	5	6,4%
Lack of participation in class	5	6,4%
Other	0	0,0%
Total	78	100 %

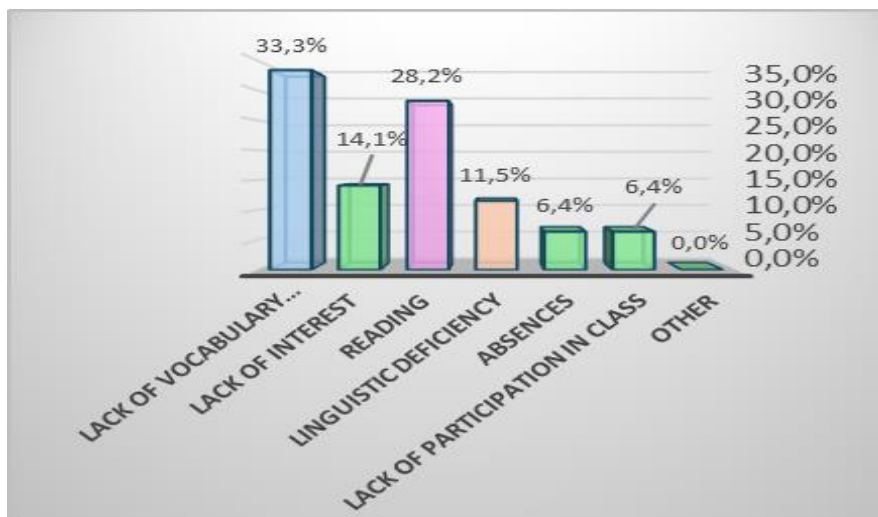


Figure 10: Causes of Writing Difficulties

The results presented in Table 10 and Figure 10 highlight that the principal cause of students’ writing difficulties lies in the lack of vocabulary knowledge (33,3%), followed closely by insufficient reading habits (28,2%). These two factors clearly point to a limited exposure to academic texts and a weak engagement with language input, which are essential for building strong writing skills. Other causes such as lack of interest (14,1%), linguistic deficiency (11,5%), frequent absences (6,4%), and limited class participation (6,4%) also contribute to the problem, albeit to a lesser degree. The predominance of vocabulary shortage and inadequate reading indicates that students’ difficulties are rooted not only in linguistic gaps but also in their academic practices, particularly the lack of consistent reading and exposure to specialized discourse. Such findings reinforce the idea that writing competence cannot be developed in isolation but must be supported by vocabulary enrichment and sustained reading practices, both of which are indispensable for mastering academic writing in their speciality.

10. What are the obstacles that you face while writing?

Table 11: Obstacles Faced While Writing

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of types of sentences	7	18,9%
Lack of specialised vocabulary	14	37,8%
Lack of content knowledge	16	43,2%
Other	0	0,0%
Total	37	100 %



Figure 11: Obstacles Faced While Writing

The findings in Table 11 and Figure 11 reveal that the most frequently reported obstacle students encounter while writing is the lack of content knowledge (43,2%), followed by the lack of specialised vocabulary (37,8%). These results indicate that many students struggle not only with linguistic elements but also with the conceptual mastery of their subject matter, which is essential for producing coherent and academically relevant texts. A smaller proportion of students (18,9%) pointed to the lack of varied sentence structures as a significant barrier, suggesting difficulties in achieving syntactic diversity and stylistic adequacy in their writing. Taken together, these obstacles highlight a dual challenge: students face both linguistic limitations and disciplinary knowledge gaps, which jointly hinder the development of effective academic writing. Addressing these issues requires pedagogical strategies that simultaneously strengthen language proficiency and deepen subject-specific knowledge to foster more competent and confident writers.

11. Which of these strategies do you use in writing?

Table 12: Strategies Used in Writing

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Brainstorming	26	32,1%
Drafting	25	30,9%
Editing	13	16,0%
Revising	17	21,0%
Other	0	0,0%
Total	81	100 %

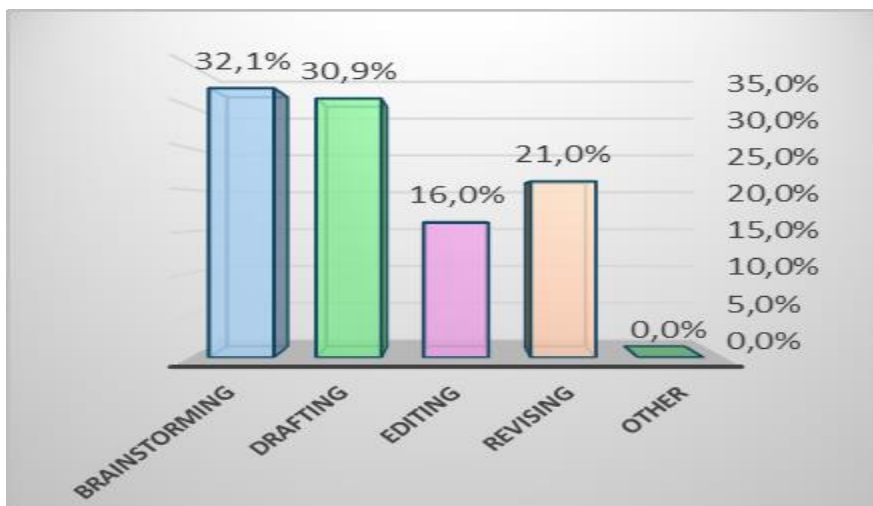


Figure Table 12: Strategies Used in Writing

The results in Table 12 and Figure 12 demonstrate that students employ a range of strategies to support their reading and writing processes, with brainstorming (32,1%) and drafting (30,9%) being the most frequently adopted. This suggests that many learners are aware of the importance of pre-writing activities and initial text construction as essential steps in academic writing. Revising (21,0%) and editing (16,0%) are less frequently practiced, indicating a relative weakness in the post-writing stage, which is crucial for refining ideas, improving clarity, and correcting language errors. The limited focus on revision and editing may explain persistent difficulties in the quality of students' academic writing, as these strategies are vital for producing polished and coherent texts. Overall, the findings suggest that while students are engaged in the initial phases of writing, they may lack sufficient training or motivation to consistently apply the later stages of the writing process, which could significantly enhance their academic performance.

12. What do you do for overcoming the writing difficulties?

Table 13: Overcoming Writing Difficulties.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Writing all the time	9	9,7%
Learning and acquiring vocabulary	23	24,7%
Mastering grammar	8	8,6%
Using writing strategies	12	12,9%
Reading extensively	21	22,6%
Asking for help from teachers/colleagues	19	20,4%
Other	1	1,1%
Total	93	100 %

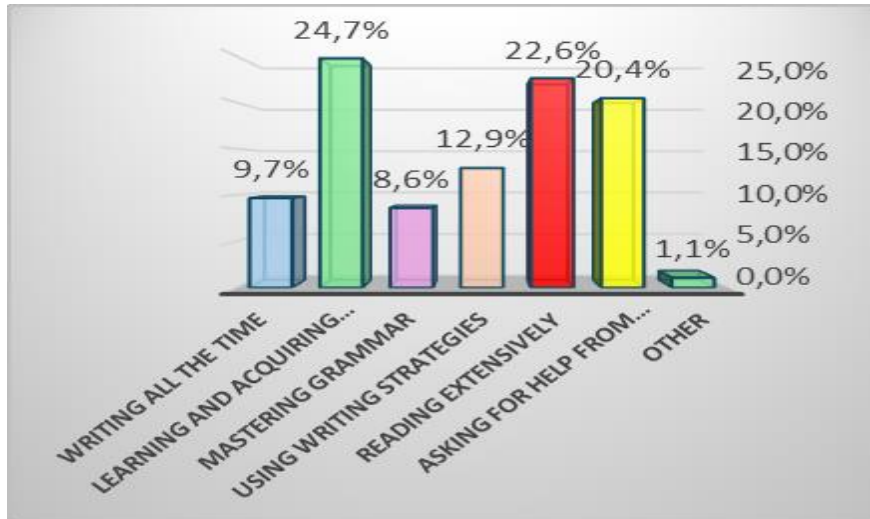


Figure Table 13: Overcoming Writing Difficulties

The findings in Table 13 and Figure 13 highlight the strategies students adopt to overcome writing difficulties, revealing a diverse set of solutions with varying degrees of popularity. The most frequent solutions include learning and acquiring vocabulary (24,7%) and reading extensively (22,6%), which indicates that students recognise the foundational role of vocabulary building and exposure to written texts in enhancing their writing skills. Asking for help from teachers or colleagues (20,4%) also emerges as an important coping mechanism, reflecting the significance of social and instructional support in addressing writing challenges. Conversely, fewer students report relying on continuous writing practice (9,7%) or grammar mastery (8,6%), suggesting that practice-based and linguistic accuracy approaches are less prioritised despite their potential benefits. The use of writing strategies (12,9%) is relatively moderate, which may point to a lack of systematic training in process-oriented writing methods. Overall, the results suggest that while students actively seek solutions through vocabulary acquisition, reading, and external support, there remains an underutilisation of consistent practice and strategy-based approaches that could substantially improve academic writing competence.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

This study focused on investigating the factors causing writing difficulty among first year Master students in the department of English Language at University of Ghardaia. The finding showed that many students (respondents) in this study read and write insufficiently, lack content and vocabulary knowledge, are unaware of the writing strategies’ impact on their writings, which confirms the hypothesis set at the beginning. The findings have also demonstrated that some students have linguistic deficiency and lack of interest, which prevents them from developing their writing competence.

Writing is one the most important skills in academic studies and requires great efforts to be developed beginning from the first year of Licence (BA) in English language. It should be considered as process and product. The writing process is crucial and requires steps, time and effort, but before all, guidance from the teacher. English as a Foreign Language learners should be guided gradually towards developing the writing competence, and teachers are invited to play this major role through a planned writing course. As mentioned earlier, the traditional way of teaching yielded no promising results, and the shift towards focusing the process of writing, according to the literature, has gained better results.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are of great importance for both teachers and students:

- Teachers of the writing skill must show willingness to teach this skill.
- Teachers should devote a considerable amount of time to preparing the writing course including the diversification of materials and tasks.
- Teachers should be patient when teaching this skill; they may find students with low language proficiency.
- Teachers should encourage pair and group work and collaborative learning.
- Teachers should respond to the students' writing through feedback and should encourage peer correction.
- Students should be drawn attention to the importance of the writing skill in their studies.
- Students must read and write for their subject-matter daily.
- Students must be involved in all the tasks in the classroom and do the homework and extra exercises.

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