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Investigating the Difficulties in Writing Research Proposals

The case of Master's Students of English at the University of Mohammed khider

Biskra

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Declaration

I, Samiha **DJEMMANI** , solemnly declare that this dissertation , submitted to the Department of the English language and literature at Biskra University. I declare that this dissertation is my own work and has not been submitted to any University or Educational institution. I also declare that the information extracted from the literature is provided in the list of references. This study was conducted at Mohammed khider University of Biskra. Algeria

Dedication

In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most
Merciful
First of all, thanks to Allah for giving me strength and patience to finish this dissertation.
This work is dictated to:
the dearest person to my heart: My mother who has raised me and has always made me prior-
ity.
To my sister specially my older sister **Hamida Djemmani** *thank you for everything you have*
done for me .I thank God for making you my sister. I appreciate all your support and prayers
you were a second mother to me in life.
To my sweet cousins: **Djemmani zainab, Djemmani Amira, Djemmani Raoune** *.I'm grateful*
for your love and support and endless help.
To all of my   friends: **Nour Achour, Nesrine Attia Barkat Sara** *who believed in me and*
brought joy into my life

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the difficulties that face second Master's students at the University of Mohammed khider Biskra in writing their research proposals. In addition, it explores the reasons behind those difficulties. To achieve these aims an exploratory research design was used with mixed -method approach that seeks to collect data of both types, quantitative and qualitative. To answer the intended research questions, a semi-structured questionnaire for students and an interview for teachers were used as data collection tools. Accordingly, (N=29) students and (N=5) teachers participated in this investigation. Descriptive and thematic analysis were used to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire and the interview. The results indicate that both students and teachers acknowledge that students face difficulties in writing sections of the research proposal. The difficulties include providing background information to write introductions, contextualizing and stating specific research problems, selecting relevant references, identifying literature gap, designing the methodology of the research and choosing appropriate research methods. Additionally, students face some challenges related to grammatical accuracy and sentence formulation. The investigation indicates that the reasons behind those difficulties are associated with the lack of practical experience in writing research proposals. In addition to the lack of knowledge about methodology and academic writing, as well as personal factors such as the lack of motivation.

Keywords: Research proposal writing, Difficulties in writing

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General introduction

Introduction

A research proposal is a plan that provides detailed information about the intended research aims, objectives, significance, and methodology. Writing a research proposal is a necessary step in academic research because it explains the research problem and its aims and plans for the whole research project. It is considered as the interface that convinces the supervisors that the research is worthy to be conducted .It also shows the students' capacities in designing and planning a research work. As a requirement for obtaining their Master's degree, students at Mohammed Khider University in the Department of English have to submit their work in the form of dissertations, the first step they start with is writing their research proposals.The student may find writing the research proposal to be a challenging task due to the fact that it is their first experience doing research work. As EFL students, they may also encounter language related difficulties.

1. **Statement of the problem**

Research proposal designing and writing can be a challenging task for some master's students, especially since it is their first formal experience with this process. This research explores the difficulties that the students of master's at the department of English at the university of Biskra face in the process of writing their research proposals. It also attempts to investigate the reasons behind these difficulties.

2. **Research questions**

Q1: What are the difficulties faced by masters' students of English in writing research proposals?

Q2: What are the different perceptions of the students' supervisors at the at the department of English concerning those difficulties?

Q3: What are the reasons behind the difficulties that face the students in writing their research proposals?

3. The research aims

.   This study aims to:

- Identify and describe the difficulties facing Master's students of English at the University of Mohammed khider Biskra in writing research proposals.

- Explain the reasons behind the student's difficulties in writing the proposals.

4. Methodology

a) The research design

The research design adopted in this study is the exploratory design to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon. Also ,we will use a mixed method approach (which combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches) in order to gain a comprehensive view of the problem.

b) The Data collection tools

The data collection tools used are a semi-structured questionnaire, which includes open-ended and closed-ended questions for the students in order to collect the quantitative and qualitative data and to obtain detailed responses. The second data collection tool is an interview for the supervisors to explore their perceptions of the problem.

c) **Data Analysis**

Presenting data analysis will be as follows: first, the data gathered from the questionnaire will be analyzed using descriptive analysis.Whereas, the data gathered from the interview will be analyzed through using thematic analysis by organizing data and exploring them in an inductive approach to facilitate the interpretation of the results.

d) **The population**

This study deals with Second Master's students (M2), specifically the branch Sciences of the Language at the Department of English , at the university of Mohammed khider Biskra the class of 2023/2024 . The population of the supervisors encompasses teachers from the department who supervise the Master's students in their research projects.

e) **The sample**

The selection of the sample is based on voluntary response sampling which means students and teachers voluntarily participate, from a population that of 73 (M2) students, 29 English students participated in this investigation to obtain a significant number of respondents. 5 supervisors participated in the study .

5. **The Significance of the study**

First, this study is significant for Master's students because it attempts to explore and describe the most frequent difficulties that may challenge them while writing their proposal.Students need to take them into consideration and avoid committing errors and mistakes, also it help them in writing research proposals more effectively.

Second, it is beneficial for the supervisors of Master's students of Mohammed khider University of Biskra because it gives them the opportunity to identify those

difficulties. Also, it gives them the chance to specify the main reasons behind those difficulties which encourages them to provide strategies to apply new solutions to this problem.

Third, this study may be significant to curriculum designers and especially the syllabus designers of the course of research methodology. It may help in finding out the strengths and weaknesses of the syllabus in order to improve the content of the lectures in a way that considers the needs of the students.

6. The structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is divided into two chapters, a theoretical chapter and practical one. The theoretical chapter is concerned with the general overview of the research proposal, its definition, its different components and elements. The second chapter is concerned with the practical part of the study where it presents the methodology of the research, it provides detailed descriptions of the data gathering tools (questionnaire, interview), as well as the analysis and the discussion of the results . The dissertation concludes with a general conclusion which presents the findings   of   the   investigation   and   its   implications.

Chapter One:

Literature review

Introduction

This research sheds light on the difficulties that may face second Master's students at the university of Mohammed khider Biskra in writing research proposals, it attempts to explore the reasons behind those difficulties. This theoretical chapter is divided into two main sections, the first section provides an overview about the research proposal including its definition, its essential components and how to write an effective proposal. The second section provides previous research studies related to the difficulties in proposal writing which are conducted in different universities.

I.   Section one: An Overview on the Research Proposal

1. Definition of research proposal

Writing a research proposal means designing a scheme that contains the essential components of the research. Scholars have put forward different definitions to research proposals. Sudjana (1998: 107) defines it as "a design that describes what will be researched and how it will be implemented." (as cited in Susanti and Mahaputri, 2022,p.30) . According to his definition, a research proposal is a scheme that shows what researchers will study and explains how the research will be conducted in details . Another definition is put forward by Rieefky (2011) where he states that "proposal is the writing that is made to explain and also to describe the purpose to someone, or a group." In other words, research proposal is a written document that describes a plan to an individual or group of people.(as cited in Susanti and Mahaputri, 2022, p.30).Similarly, Wong (2007) states that a research proposal is intended to convince others that you have a worthwhile research project and that you have the competence and the work-plan to complete it. Greene and Lidinsky (2015) define research proposal as a" formal plan that outlines the aims for conducting a research project, specifying the methods, what a researcher intends to use, and

describing the implications of the work" this definition explains clearly that the proposal works to specify and describe what students will investigate exactly and what methodology they will choose, in addition to the objectives of their work and its eventual benefits. Another definition is proposed by Denscombe (2012, p.7) "research proposal is a relatively brief document that contains an outline plan for the research project".According to him, proposal is a document that summarizes the plan of the research. Kumar (2011) suggests that a good research proposal must follow certain criteria where it must tell the supervisor what the researcher proposes to do, how them plans to proceed and why the chosen strategy has been selected. In addition to confirming and well designing the methodology section to readers to obtain credible answers to the study.

Based on the previous definitions it can be concluded that a research proposal is a written scheme that outlines the whole research study where it explains carefully the design, purpose, aims and the methodology.

2. Components of research proposal

Research proposal contains basic components as any other written document where each component presents certain points and clarifies important details. Different scholars have stated various definitions and descriptions to the proposal components. The main components can be presented under the following headings:

2-1- Introduction

Introduction is the first section students start with, it provides a brief overview of the research topic. Sandelowski (2002:9) explains that the introduction " sets the stage" . According to his definition, introduction has the function of providing the background information that helps to understand the research. (as cited in Klopper ,2008,p. 62).

According to Memon (2019) introduction writing can be a challenging task for students. She suggests certain tips that must be followed to write an effective introduction. The first tip is that students must try to catch the reader's attention by using quotes or sayings. The second tip is providing background about the research and indicating the hypothesis of the research. The third tip indicates that the researcher should not start writing the introduction without understanding what the real problem is and narrow it as much as possible.

2-2- Statement of the problem

Kuthari (2004) defines a research problem as a set of difficulties experienced or faced by the researcher in either a theoretical or practical context and works to obtain solutions to this difficulty. According to him , a research problem is an essential task that must be well selected and produced by the researcher. In the same context, Memon's (2019) defines research problems as a collection of statements that work to present and define the existing research topic, she explains that formulating the statement depends on the researcher's personal experience, the social context and personal interest . It must presented in way that is logical enough to the reader's mind. She suggests certain stages that must be followed by the researcher for framing the research problem . it starts with focusing on stating the what of the research and when , where and why it will be conducted . In addition to this explanation , Kumar (2011, p.23) describes the research problem as the essential step in conducting research he emphasized in explaining its importance that it clarifies and builds the whole research study.

2-3- Literature review

Reviewing the literature is an essential part of proposal writing. Creswell (2005, p. 79) state that a literature review «is a written summary of journal articles, books and other documents that describes the past and current state of information." .In this definition Creswell explains clearly that the literature review is an overview of previous research papers where it attempts to describe and analyze the existing information in those different sources. Memon (2019) defines literature as the abstract of previous studies. According to her, the researcher can build their literature based on the information included in the other research abstract. Memon stated that reviewing the literature provides critical analysis to the previous studies through making comparisons between studies and choosing the most appropriate and finding the gap and weaknesses of the research. According to Kumar (2011, p. 35) ,literature review has an important role in the research process where it serves the study with theoretical background and gives the researcher clear context to compare his review with other researcher reviews who are in the same field of research.

Bums and Grove (2005, p.93) suggests two important tips that must be be followed for writing a good review which involve that the researcher should first read and criticize the studies that he/she gathers from different sources and give feedback about them. Second, he/she should explain how the present study will contribute to the knowledge of the field. (as cited in Klopper ,2008,p. 62).

2-4- Research questions

According to Hennink ,Hutter and Bailey (2011) a research question "is a question that you propose to answer through data collection". In other words, the researcher should design their investigation based on certain research questions that will be answered through collecting and analyzing the data from different research

tools. Bradley (2001,p.574) states that research questions must be "stated clearly, are researchable, and involve some concept related to either theory or an applied context". Silverman (2010) mentions that research questions have an important purpose in conducting the process of research. According to him, they help in structuring and giving coherence to the study. They put the researcher in the context and keep him/her focused in addition to building clear boundaries for the study and choosing the appropriate data collection tools and methods.

2-5- Research aims

Durrheim and Kevin (2004,p.82) define research aims as "a brief and concrete statement of what the researcher plans to investigate". In other words, research aims are statements that outline specific objectives and goals . According to them, effective research aims should be clear and explicit. In addition to they should explain the research questions that will be investigated in the study.

2-6- Research hypothesis

Research hypothesis can be one of the proposal components. Kumar (2011, p. 54) defines research hypothesis as "a speculative statement that is subjected to verification through a research study." . In this definition, Kumar indicates that hypothesis is a statement that will be verified by the researcher through his /her investigation. According to him, using hypotheses is not a requirement in some research types ,such as in the qualitative research studies .

Research hypothesis, according to Kumar (2011),when used in the study, it can bring clarity, specificity, and focus to research work. Kothari (2004) states that hypothesis "is an assumption or some supposition to be proved or disproved." He points out that research hypotheses have to follow certain characteristics where they must be clear and precise enough, limited in scope and must be specific and capable

of being tested. According to Memon (2019), hypotheses are statements that   will tested by the research. She strongly believes that the hypothesis must be framed and she proposes certain tips to construct a framed hypothesis. First, it must be realistic and understood, Second, it must be ethical and worth investigating by the researcher. Third, it must add clear value to the field of research.

2-7-   Research Methodology

Research methodology is one of the basic components of a research proposal. Memon (2019) describes the research methodology as the essential part in a research project. According to her , methodology is a section which explains the reasons beyond choosing the research procedures and explains how those procedures fit the research project. According to Brown (2006) "Methodology is the philosophical framework within which the research is conducted or the foundation upon which the research is based". Brown indicates that methodology is a plan which guides the research and explains how it is built. Allan and Randy (2005) indicate that the methodology section must follow certain criteria where the methodology must be appropriate and credible enough to achieve the research aims and the methods used must be well explained to the point that they can be easily replicated by other studies.

2-8-   Data collection tools

Kothari (2005) describes data collection tools as methods used to collect data for the study. According to him, the data can be gathered through using essential methods where he summarized them in observation method, questionnaire method and interview method. He also mention that using data collection tools has advantages on the researcher study such as giving credibility to the research information and gives the researcher more control on the study.

2-9- Research design

Research design refers to the plan of work which the researcher will use to conduct their study. Durrheim and kevin (2004 , p.161) put forth a definition for research design. According to them , "it is strategic framework for action that serves as bridge between research questions and the execution, or implementation of the research strategy".

Millan and Schumacher (2001) also define it as "a plan for selecting subjects, research sites, and data collection procedures to answer the research question(s)" in other words, it is a map which collects all the techniques which guide the researcher to conduct the study. According to Kumar (2011,p.95) a research design "is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems"

2-10-   Data analysis

It refers to the description of the process of analyzing data, the researcher here must explain how they plan to analyse them. Yin (2014) describes data analysis as a "systematic process of examining evidence, identifying patterns, and drawing conclusions from the research data to address the research objectives and contribute to the overall research findings".

Research proposal contains essential components where each component explains important details in the research Starting first with the introduction which provides an overview about the topic. The statement of the problem states the problem that will be investigated. The research aims which explain the objectives the researcher wants to achieve. The literature review provides previous studies which are related to the field of the study which consequently help in finding the literature gap and indicating the significance of conducting the study. The methodology section which explains the adopted plan of work and the procedures of the researcher.

Research design provides the plan of the conducted study. Data analysis refer to the process of examining data.

3. How to write effective research proposal

Due to the importance of the research proposal in guiding and presenting the essential elements of the research and convincing the evaluators of its feasibility and significance. Students must put their efforts into writing it perfectly and avoid falling into the common mistakes that others commit. To achieve this aim Wallwork and Southern (2020) suggest some tips that must be followed to write an effective research proposal.

3-1- Title

According to Wallwork and Southern (2020) , "The title should contain as many keywords as possible to help both the reader and search engines identify the key concepts." In other words, writing an effective proposal title must highlight the keywords of the research in order to facilitate to the reader to understand the main focus of the research and its main concepts. In addition , Wallwork and Southern (2020) suggest to the students to show their proposal title to their colleagues and ask them if they can edit it or make it more specific then choose the appropriate one . According to them this technique will help the students to avoid writing "clever or witty" titles .

3-2- Introduction

Wallwork and Southern (2020), propose to students that the information written in the introduction must be unfamiliar and less general to readers or reviewers. They suggest the students need to cut any information that would be familiar even to a general reader. According to them, that information will discourage the readers to be interested to read the introduction carefully.

3-3- Literature review

According to Wallwork and Southern (2020), students demonstrated common mistakes when writing their review of literature. Students think that all the verbs must be in the same tense. Due to this mistake, Wallwork and Southern (2020) advocate that there is no simple solution but students should adopt different tenses consciously and clearly. Unless students cannot use the tenses clearly, they should adopt using past simple formula as the appropriate tense for reviewing the literature in order to avoid ambiguity and misunderstanding. Furthermore, they suggest that students must delete unnecessary and extra words because it makes the review boring and readers may simply stop reading it .

3-4-   Methods

 Wallwork and Southern (2020), explain that students must use the present simple tense to describe procedures in order to help the reader to understand the methodology that they will work wit. In addition, they indicate that the methodology section must follow sequence steps. In other words, students must use firstly, secondly at the beginning of the sentences to help the reader to clarify the succession of steps. According to them, this sequence step will encourage the reader to replicate the methodology.

3-5- Limitations

Wallwork and Southern (2020) ,also shed light on the way students write the limitation section : "Try to present your limitations in a positive light. Always justify your limitations don't just tell readers that you didn't do something, also tell them why you didn't do something". In simpler terms, instead of just listing the limitations, the students need to explain them and justify the choices they made due to these limitations.

In addition to the above mentioned tips, Wallwork and Southern(2020) suggest other tips which are related to proposal writing in general and may help the students to write effective research proposals. The tips are as follows:

 a) **Student must make proposal writing understood**

Wallwork and Southern (2020) explain that students must think about the reviewer . Therefore, they must make their proposal reader friendly to the evaluators' eyes. In other words, proposal writing must be clear in terms of language, understood and well written so that it helps to minimize the time and the efforts of the reviewer. In addition, students must make their writing interesting and use layout and titles to keep the reviewer focusing on what is important in the proposal.

 b) **Students must create outline**

Wallwork and Southern (2020) explain that when students start writing their research proposal, they feel confused and immersed with a lot of ideas and thoughts due to the lack of experience. To prevent this problem , the authors suggest for students to create an outline paper. It helps them to organize their ideas and not to lose. They also insist that creating an outline is a successful technique which can effectively help in the proposal progress.

 c) **Students must avoid punctuation and spelling a mistakes**

According to Wallwork and Southern (2020), students must be aware of committing any kind of writing mistakes (punctuation and spelling) so they must check and revise their work and learn how to use punctuation appropriately. Wallwork and Southern(2020) provide a tip to avoid committing those mistakes by exaggerating in proofreading the entire paper.

Based on Wallwork and Southern (2020) tips, effective research proposals should consider the following aspects. A title which contains keywords to facilitate

understanding the main concepts. An introduction which must provide unfamiliar information to readers. A literature review which requires using the verb tenses appropriately and cutting the unnecessary information. A methodology section which follows a chronological order and sequenced steps. Mentioning the study's limitations and justifying them. In general terms, the proposal writing should follow an outline to organize the ideas and prevent the confusion. The proposal should be clear, concise and without writing mistakes especially punctuation and spelling ones. Wallwork and Southern (2020) insist on checking and revising the proposal before the submission.

II.   Section Two: Difficulties in Writing Research Proposal.

Several studies attempt to investigate the most recurrent and frequent number of difficulties encountered by students when writing their research proposal. By examining these studies, we aim to gain a better understanding of those challenges. This section explores these difficulties and the possible reasons behind them.

1. Difficulties in Writing the introduction of the Research Proposal

Writing introduction is an essential part in any research proposal, due to its importance in introducing the research topic and providing the reader with an overview about the whole research.

Susanti and Mahaputri (2022) conducted a study in the department of English at STKIP Yayasan Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh University for the aim of knowing the students' problems in writing research proposals. The results revealed that the section that was the most difficult to write for the participants in their study is the introduction.

Suryatiningsih (2019) conducted study in STKIP PGRI Pasuruan University in Indonesia .He mentions in his investigation that the students face problems in writing good introductions for their proposals. The main challenge for them was

providing background information to support their introduction. He also reveals that students were not able to define the focus of their study in the introduction. However, the study indicates that the students were successful in outlining and formulating the purposes/aims and stating the nature of their research in introduction writing.

2.   Difficulty in Formulating Research Problem

Susanti and Mahaputri (2022) indicate that 56.86% of students who participated in their study struggled with difficulties in formulating their research problem in research proposals where they failed in providing and developing a clear background of their problem of the research.

3.   Difficulty in Writing Research Aims

Susanti and Mahaputri (2022) revealed in the results of the investigation that 66.67% students face problems in formulating research aims when writing their research proposal. According to study results, students failed in formulating research aims where they make general research aims instead of specifying them.

4.   Difficulties in Writing Literature Review

A number of studies has found strong evidence that students find many difficulties writing the literature review part. These difficulties can occur in different steps and areas in literature review.

a. Difficulties in selecting the appropriate bibliography

Suryatiningsih (2019) indicate that students have problems in dealing with the criteria for inclusion and exclusion of certain sources. His did not clearly explain why certain studies were included in the literature review while others were excluded. Suryatiningsih (2019) also state that the students have the tendencies to include irrelevant topics and theories with extra information in the literature review which can cause confusion and can make their writing less- focused. Similarly, Susanti and Mahaputri (2022) , at Sktip Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh University explain that the majority of the students found problems in limiting the scope of the previous theories and in determining appropriate studies which have a relation to the context of their studies. The researchers mention that the main reason for this problem can be related to the lack of research skills that students should work on. Another difficulty in selecting appropriate bibliography is that the students sometimes use outdated sources instead of using current and updated sources for their review (Suryatiningsih ,2019).

b. Difficulties in synthesizing previous research

Suryatiningsih (2019) puts forward that students may find it difficult to synthesize previous studies and relate them to the topic being discussed. He notices that the students are incapable of justifying, explaining, and correlating the previous research studies that they find with their literature review part.

c. Difficulties in identifying the literature gap

Achempong (2021) indicates that one of the problems that students have is the failure to understand the context of the previous studies and determining the gaps that the researcher has found in the literature. Similarly, Wahyuni and Inayati (2020) which conducted study at University of Mohammadabad Malang that (56%) of participants were unable to explain and show how their research topic is different

from what is existing in literature especially if it is already repeated topic so that they struggled with showing clearly topic differences.

d. Difficulties in reviewing and criticizing the literature on the topic

Achempong (2021) points out the majority of the students who participated in his study in Nanjing Tech University struggle to provide appropriate and effective criticism of the literature. and this is due to the lack of critical analyzing experience in research.

5. Difficulties in Writing Methodology

Manchishi and Nadhlovu (2015) conducted a study at the University of Zambia, the aim was to find out the common mistakes and challenges faced by postgraduate students in writing research proposals. The data obtained from the study revealed that one of the main mistakes students struggled with was related to the methodology of the research. Supervisors stated that most Master's students use what is called "wrong methodology" where they choose the paradigm that is not appropriate to their research and also use methods and techniques without properly thinking of how they are applied . The researcher explained that due to a lack of practical knowledge about writing proposals . They make mistakes like giving definition of the methodology without explaining how it relates to the study . Another challenge the supervisors noticed that most of the students created certain templates for the methodology where they just changed the research area without giving their touches and this problem led to a similarity between proposals.

Suryaniningsih (2019) states that most EFL learners face difficulties in writing the Methodology in their research proposals . He categorized those difficulties as follows:

a) Difficulty Explaining the Methodology

20% of the participants in Suryatiningsih study (2019) found difficulties in writing and designing the part of the methodology in the research proposal. where they mention the methodology, data collection, data analysis, and research design as points without justification of their choices or giving explanations about choosing the research paradigm.

b) Difficulty in selecting the research site

The results of the investigation showed that (20 %) the EFL students have problems in specifying the place of the research and which institution it will be conducted. In other words, the students did not include the research site.

c) Difficulty in including the components of the methodology

(15%) of students struggled to include the essential components of the methodology such as the research design, research site, participants, data collection techniques, and data analysis.

In his study at Iain palangka raya university in Indonesia, Ningsih (2020) explains the major reason why students struggles with research proposal writing. He reports that the students expressed their need for more practical experience in the methodology course. The students stated that they take it as theories and do not practice it in class sessions. Some students said that they wanted to study it again as a module or be guided by a supervisor and advisor to gain a practical background about the methodology and its components.

6. Other difficulties related to research proposal writing

The previous studies have also indicated other difficulties in relation to proposal writing.

a) Difficulties with the supervision style

Manchishi , Nahlovu and Mwanza (2015) proved in her investigation that supervisors sometimes wrote negative comments on the draft proposal which lack detailed explanation about the mistakes students committed. Students were left confused about what they needed to do. Students stated that such comments discourage them from writing their proposals, and leave them unsure about what to do to improve their proposals. They give them ambiguous instructions to work on without explanation or simplification about the steps they should follow with a limited and short period of time for correction.

b) Linguistics difficulties

According to Ningsih (2020) students in Iain palangka raya university in Indonesia face problems in what he calls "Technical writing".The vocabulary students choose is not academic and is not appropriate to the topic of their proposals. Students often rely on Google Translate and dictionaries in order to acquire terms they need to write, however, these terms can be irrelevant to the topic. In addition, a number of students stated that they get confused in using tenses in proposal writing, where they cannot differentiate between using present, past or future and most of the time find themselves in front of mixing them in their writing.

c) Lack of materials and lectures explanation

Manchishi et al (2015) mention another challenge which is associated with unavailability of lectures. According to their study results, students indicate that most of the problems they face is lack of reading materials where the university libraries

did not offer books, journals and articles for their students and this makes another challenge for them. In addition, students indicate that teachers and lecturers did not help them in finding those materials (books…) and did not provide the students with a good explanation of lessons.

The abovementioned studies on the difficulties that EFL students face in different universities in writing their research proposals are worthwhile. They focus on exploring the students' views and perceptions about these difficulties. However, researchers have not treated the reasons behind such difficulties in detail. They also have not discussed the different perceptions and views of student's supervisors. Moreover, no research has been conducted within the context of the University of Mohamed Khider Biskra, highlighting a clear literature gap. This gap underscores the need for studies that address the issue.

Conclusion

A research proposal is a detailed formal scheme that outlines the entire research work. The poor writing of the proposal can lead to a lack of clarity and minimize the achieved goal of the research. This theoretical chapter explored the concept of research proposal, its definition, its components, tips to write effective proposals. In addition to examining some of the significant related theories concerning the challenges and difficulties students face in writing their proposals.

Chapter Two:

Filed work and Data

Analysis

Introduction

This study investigates the difficulties that face Master's students in writing research proposals at Mohammed Khider University of Biskra. The study aims to identify and describe the students and supervisors' perceptions on the different difficulties the students encounter. In addition, it aims to find out the reasons behind those difficulties. The present chapter describes to describe the methodology used in this study . In addition, it presents the results obtained from students' questionnaires and supervisors' interviews. Furthermore, it seeks to analyze and explain these findings in the lights of the research questions.

1. **Research design**

To address the previous research questions, the researcher employed an exploratory research design with mixed-methods approach research approaches. A semi-structured questionnaire which combines open-ended and close-ended questions for the students in order to collect the quantitative and qualitative data and to obtain detailed responses. And an interview for supervisors to explore their perceptions.

2. **Context and Sample**

This study was conducted at the University of Mohammed Khider Biskra at the Department of English for the academic year 2023/2024. The population chosen in this study is second year master's students the Specialty of Sciences of the Language. From a population that contains 73 students, 29 students took part in the study. The Population has been chosen for two main reasons. The first, the students are required to design research proposals as a part of their Master's research project. The second, because it's their first experience to conduct academic research so that they face difficulties and challenges in writing their proposals.

3. Data collection tools

The data collection tools employed to achieve the study objectives included a semi-structured questionnaire administrated to students to explore their different perceptions about the difficulties in writing research proposals. And structured interview to supervisors in order to gather depth insights and their views concerning the challenges their students face while writing their proposals.

4. Students' Questionnaire

4.1 . Description of the Students' Questionnaire

Semi-structured questionnaires were used as a tool in this study to explore the students' perceptions and views concerning the difficulties they encounter when writing their research proposals, the questionnaire was divided into seven sections. The first section targets background information about the participants. The students were asked to state their age, their level in English and how they performed in the courses of methodology and academic writing. Data collected on the latter, helps the researcher to relate the students' performance in these courses to the level of difficulties they have. The second section aims to collect data about the difficulties in writing the introduction section. The researcher asked students two close-ended questions which include asking the participants if they were able to provide enough background information to support the introduction in addition to asking if they were able to state the nature of the research in the introduction. The gathered data help the researcher in identifying to what extent students face difficulty in writing their introduction.   The third section centered around the difficulties in writing the literature review section in the proposal. The researcher suggested a number of difficulties related to the task of literature review writing and asked the participants to select one of those problems for the aim of exploring the different difficulties they

struggled with in literature review writing. Section four was concerned with difficulties in formulating the research aims and research problem. In this section the participants were asked if they face problems in developing a clear background to their research problem and to what extent they face difficulty in stating their research problem and which aspect exactly. Subsequently, researchers gathered responses on the difficulties in formulating the research aims. Section five was about the difficulties in writing the research methodology section. The researcher asked the students if they faced difficulty in writing their methodology section, if they were able to explain the reasons behind the choice of their research design and procedures . In section six, the researcher sought data on the extent of the difficulties the students faced when choosing appropriate terminology and when applying appropriate writing mechanics. In addition, some questions targeted data on the students' experience with the supervisors' style and feedback.. In addition, the researcher required the students to state other difficulties in designing and writing research proposals. Section seven was about stating the reasons behind those difficulties and suggesting some solutions. The gathered data help the researcher to identify the student perceptions on the reasons behind the difficulties they face.

4.2.Students' Questionnaire Administration

The completed questionnaire was created using Google Forms and distributed online to the target population through Facebook groups. Submitting the questionnaire online was the only possible means as M2 students were not available at the university.

1.Analysis of Students' Questionnaire

Section one: Background Information

Item1: How old are you?
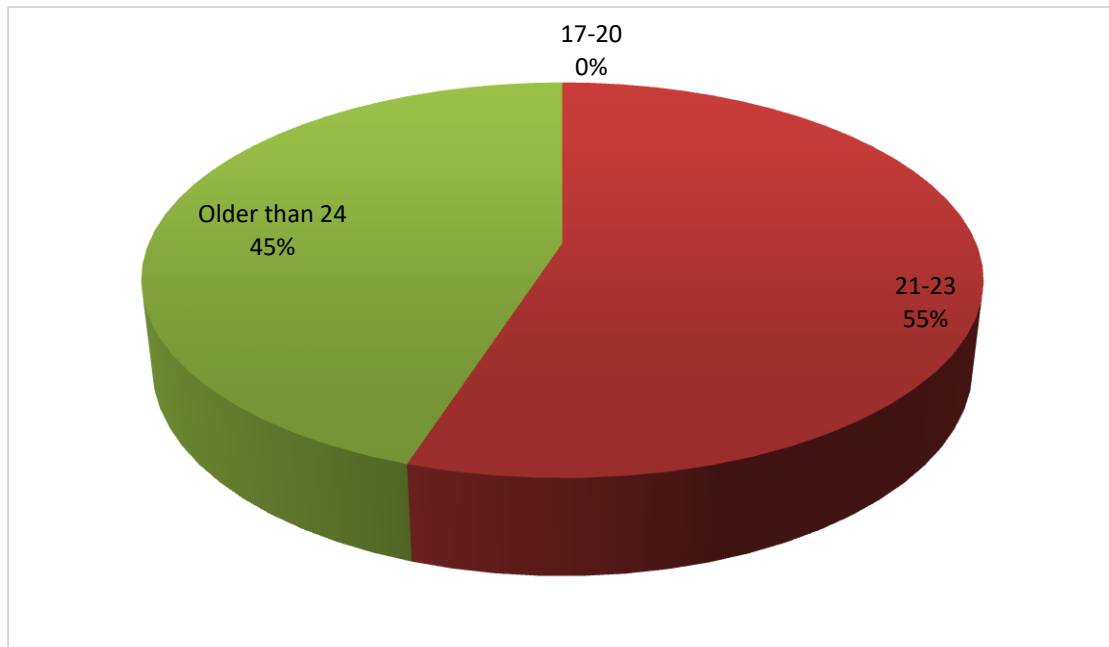
Chart 1: *Second master age range*

Table 1: *Second master age range*

Age	frequency	Percentage%
17- 20	0	00%
21- 23	15	55%
Older than 24	14	45%
Total	**29**	**100%**

The results indicate that 55 % of Master's students range between 21-23 while 45% are older than 24, none of the students in this sample is between the ages of 17 and 20. The results prove that most of the students' age range between 21 – 23 years old.

Item 2: How do you consider your level in English?
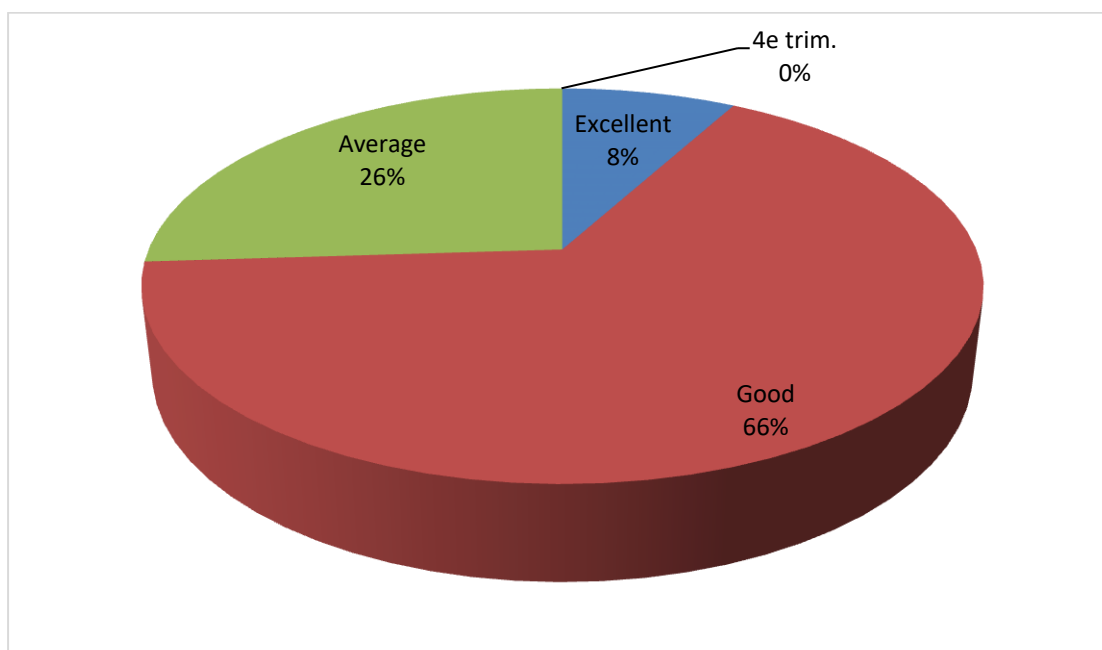
Chart 2: *Students' level of English*

Table 2: *Students' level of English*

Options	frequency	Percentage%
Excellent	2	08%
Good	19	66%
Average	8	26%
Poor	0	00%
Total	**29**	**100**

The information provided by the chart (2) showed how the participants of the questionnaire considered their level in English. The results revealed that among the twenty-nine (29) students twenty(20) of them, (66%), which is the majority, consider their level of English to be good. While eight (8) of them, (26%) consider their level to be average. Only one(1) student considers their level to be excellent while none of the students responded with "poor ".

Item3. How well did you do in your research methodology course?
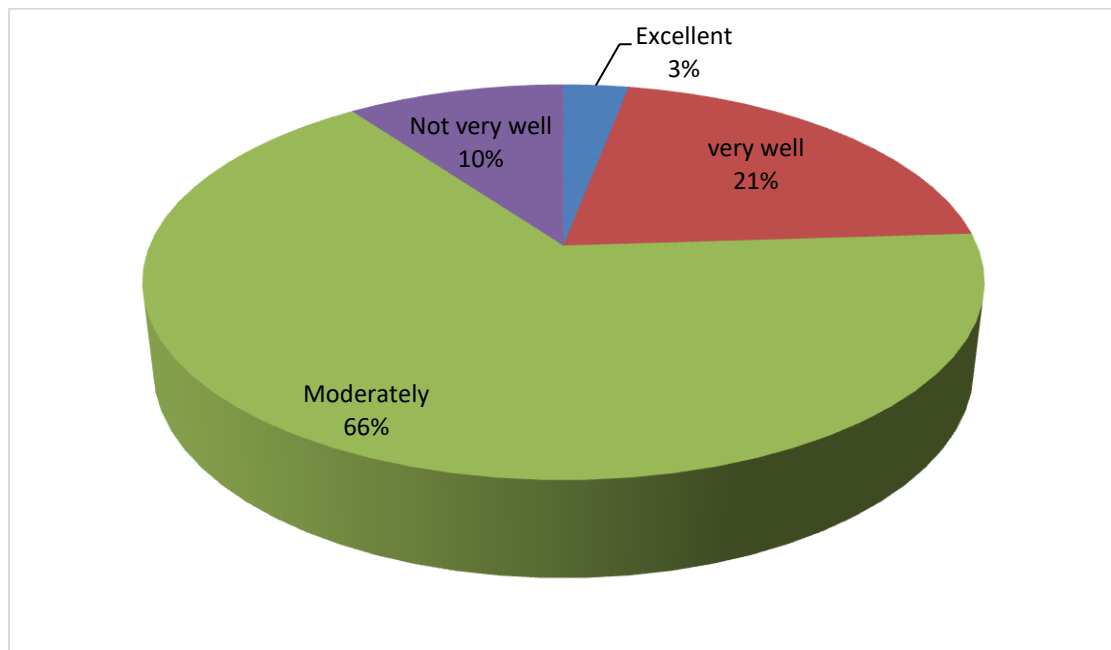
Chart 3: *Student's proficiency in research methodology course.*

Table 3: *Student's proficiency in research methodology course.*

Options	frequency	Percentage%
Excellent	1	03%
Very well	6	21%
Moderately	19	66%
Not very well	3	10%
Poorly	0	00%
Total	**29**	**100**

Chart (03) above shows that (66%) of students stated they have done moderately well in the course of research methodology, while (21%) have performed very well.(10%) responded that their proficiency is not very well and (3%) revealed that they are Excellent. None of the students responded that their performance in the research methodology course is poor.

Item4: how well did you do in your academic writing course?
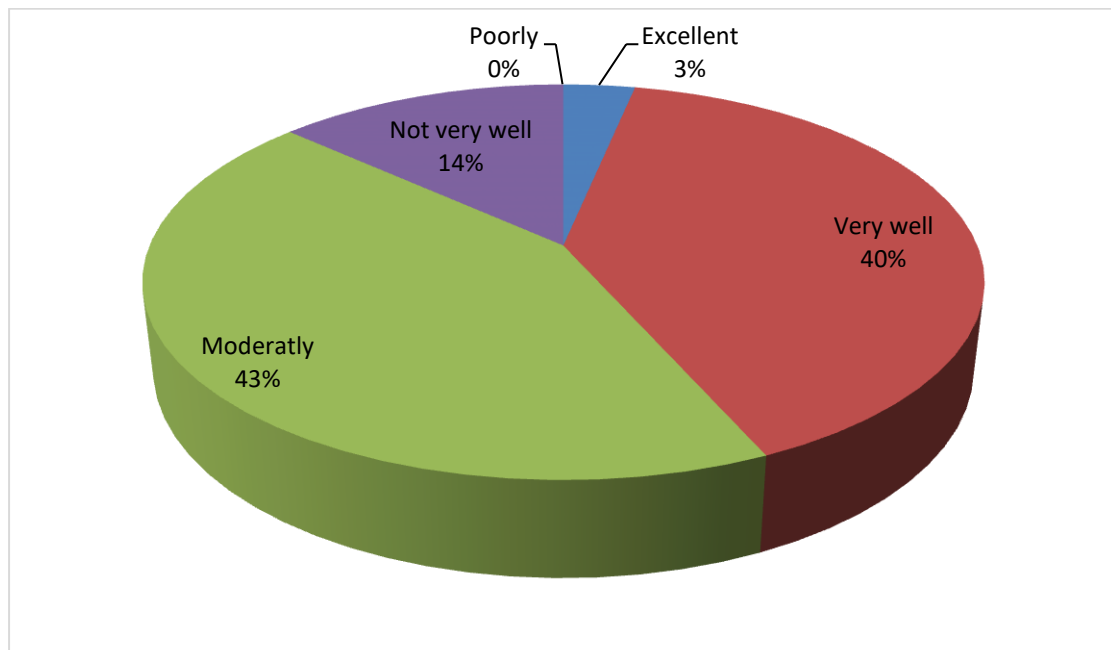
Chart 4: *Student's proficiency in academic writing course.*

Table 4: *Student's proficiency in academic writing course.*

Options	frequency	Percentage%
Excellent	1	3%
Very well	12	40%
Moderately well	13	43%
Not very well	3	14%
Poorly	0	00%
Total	**29**	**100**

The table (4) above provides information about a student's proficiency in an academic writing course. One (1) student stated that they have been excellent in this course. Twelve (12) students stated that they did very well with the course. While thirteen (13) students have performed moderately well. Four (4) students indicate that they did not do very well. None of the students in this table declared that they did

poorly in the writing course. Overall, it can be concluded that the majority of students did well in their Academic writing course by (44.8%).

Section two: Analysis of Students' difficulties in writing research proposal introduction section

Item 5: How well were you able to provide enough background information to support your introduction?
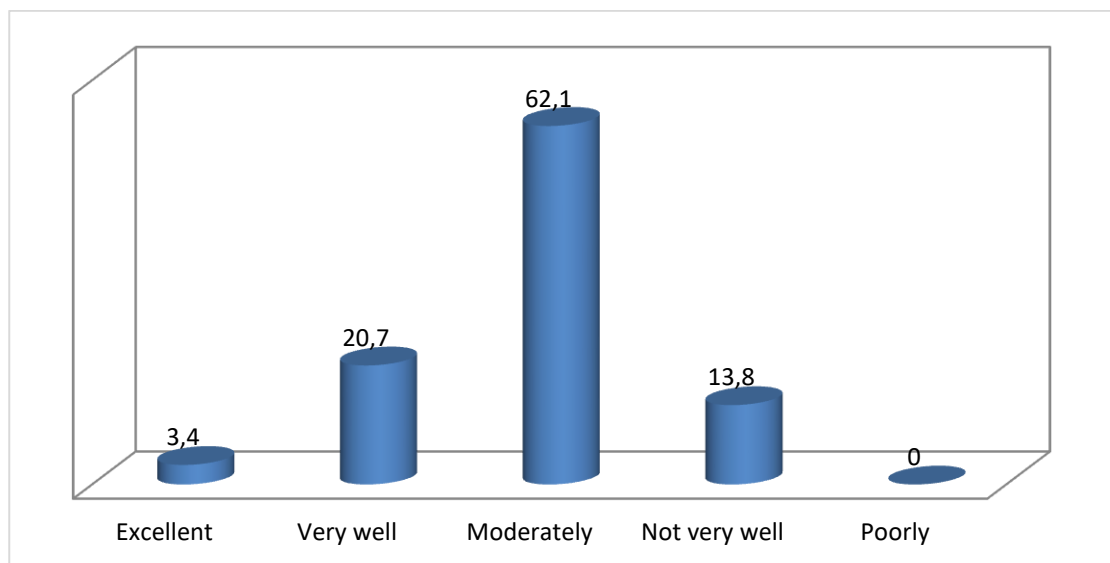
Chart 5: *The students' abilities in providing background information when writing the introduction.*

Table 5: *The students' abilities in providing background information when writing the introduction.*

Options	frequency	Percentage%
Excellent	1	3.4%
Very well	6	20.7%
Moderately well	18	62.1%
Not very well	4	13.8%
Poorly	0	00%
Total	**29**	**100**

Chart (5) shows the students' responses about their ability to provide enough background information to support their introduction. (3,4%) rated themselves as Excellent. (20,7) declared that they did very well while (62,1%) felt they did it moderately well while (13,8%) stated they did not do it very well. None of the students declared that they did poorly in providing background information when writing the introduction. Based on the responses, it can be proved that the majority of the participants believe that they are somehow able to provide enough background information to support their introduction while writing their proposals. This suggests that most students are somehow confident in their ability , but there is room for improvement.

With (13,8%) stating they were "Not very well" and only (3,4%) rating themselves as "Excellent ", it indicates that a significant portion of students lack strong confidence in their ability to provide sufficient background information.

Item 6: How well do you feel you can state the nature of your research in the introduction ?
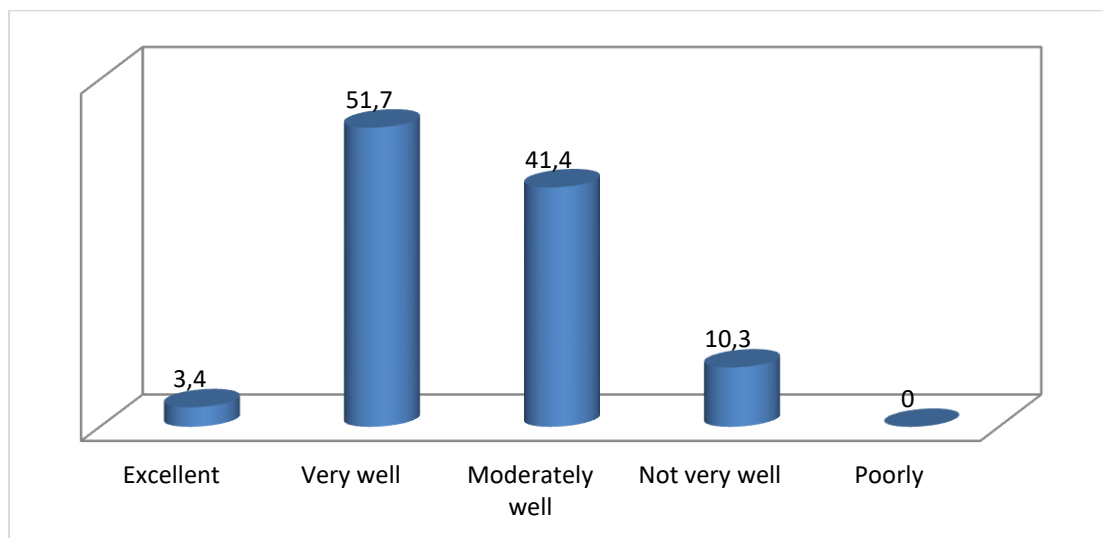
Chart 6: *Student's proficiency in stating the nature of research in the introduction.*

Table 6: *Student's proficiency in stating the nature of research in the introduction.*

Research in the introduction	participants	Percentage%
Excellent	1	3.4%
Very well	14	51.7%
Moderately well	12	41.4%
Not very well	2	10.3%
Poorly	0	00%
Total	**29**	**100**

The results of this question showed in the chart (6) indicate that most of the students were stating the nature of the research very well in their introduction. (3.4%) stated that they were Excellent, (51.7%) revealed that they did the task very well while (41,4%) did it moderately well and (10,3%) stated they had certain difficulties in stating the nature of their research in the introduction writing. None of the students indicated that they did poorly . The results indicate that despite being confident about

their ability in stating the nature of the research in their introductions.   A large proportion of the students indicated that there is still need for improvement in this matter. The (10,3%) of the students who rated their ability as "Not very well" suggest they are struggling and indeed have a difficulty in the matter.

Section three: Analysis of students' difficulties in writing literature review section.

Item7: Which of the following tasks have you struggled with?
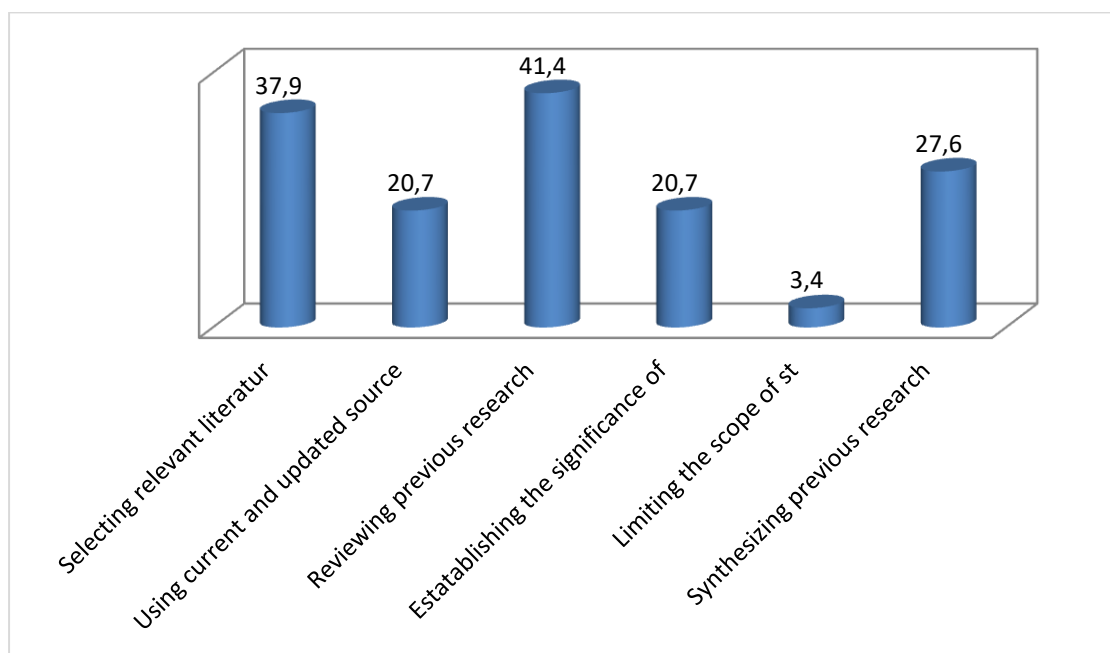
Chart 7: *Students challenging tasks in literature review.*

Table 7: *Students challenging tasks in literature review.*

Options	frequency	Percentage%
Selecting relevant literature	6	37.9%
Using current and updated sources	3	20.7%
Reviewing previous research	9	41.4%
Establishing the significance of the study	3	20.7%
Limiting the scope of the study	1	3.4%
Synthesizing previous research	8	27.6%
Total	**29**	**100**

Chart (7) above shows the percentage of the participants' choice of the most challenging task in literature review while writing their proposals. Based on the responses, it can be indicated that selecting relevant literature and reviewing previous research are the most challenging tasks for the students. Reviewing previous research was the choice of (41.4%) of participants while selecting relevant literature was the choice of (37.9%) of respondents. A group of (27.6%) found synthesizing previous research to be the most challenging one. "Using current and updated sources" and "establishing the significance of the study" represent (20.7%). A small proportion of (3.4%) stated that limiting the scope of the study is the most difficult. These results indicate that students may benefit from additional support and resources in conducting literature reviews for their research proposals.

Section four: Analysis of the students difficulties in formulating and stating the research problem and the research aims

Item 8: Have you faced a difficulty in developing a clear background of the research problem?
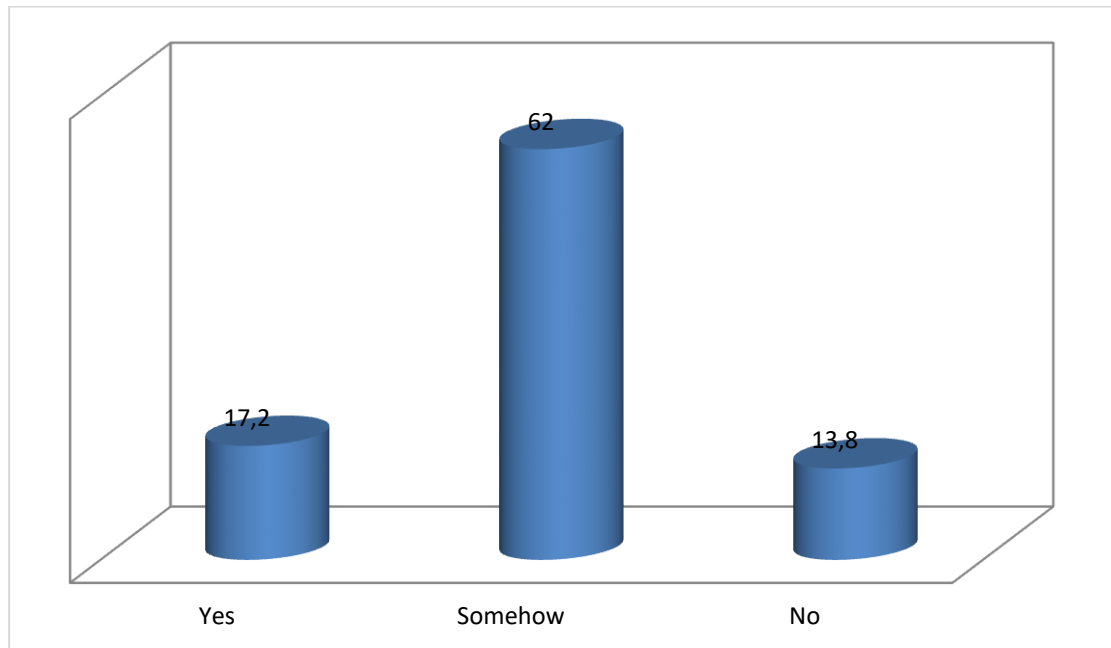
Chart 8: *Student's proficiency in developing a clear background to research problems.*

Table 8: *Student's proficiency in developing a clear background to research problems.*

Options	frequency	percentage%
Yes	5	17.2%
Somehow	20	62%
No	4	13.8%
Total	**29**	**100%**

The results presented in table (8) show that (17. 2%) answered "yes" indicating clearly that they have difficulty in stating the context and the background

of the research problem effectively. However, (62%) of students answered with "somehow "and (13.8%) answered with "No". It indicates clearly that the majority of the students experience a certain level of difficulty in presenting the background of their research problem. This means that further guidance and support may be needed in this area to help students improve their research writing skills.

Item9: a- To what extent have you faced difficulty in stating the research problem?
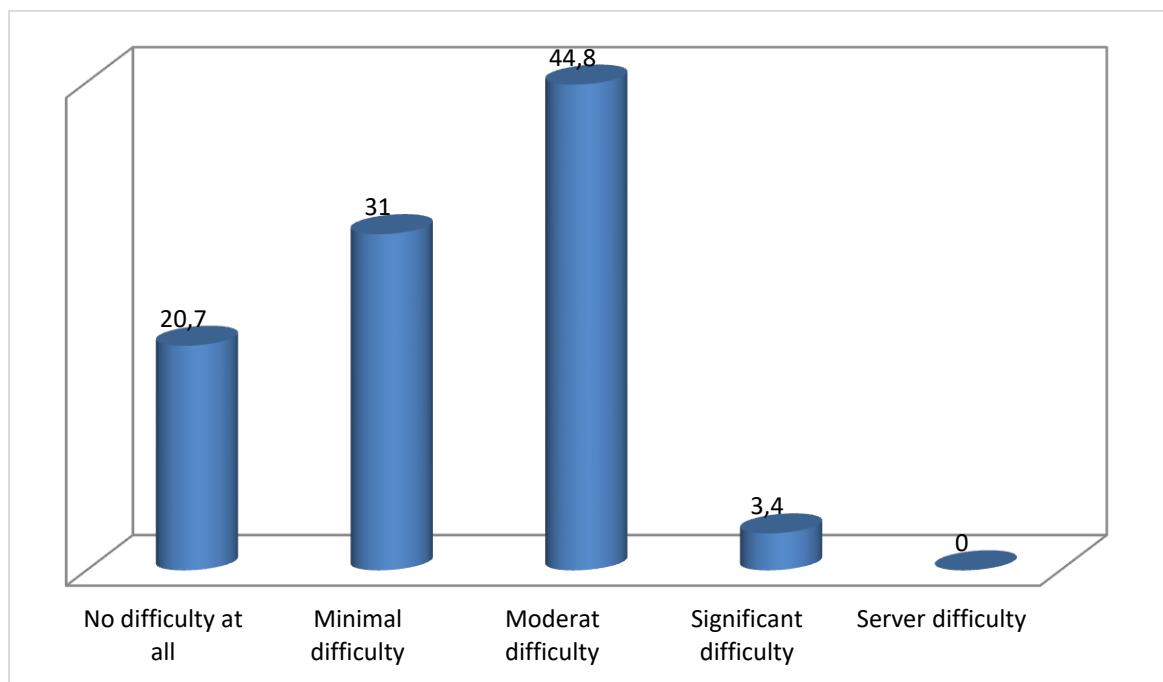
Chart 9: *The extent of difficulty in stating the research problem.*

Table 9: *The extent of difficulty in stating the research problem.*

Options	frequency	Percentage%
No difficulty at all	6	20.7%
Minimal difficulty	9	31%
Moderate difficulty	13	44.8%
Significant difficulty	1	3.4%
Server difficulty	0	00%
Total	**29**	**100**

The results presented in chart (9) show that (20.7%) of the participants do not face difficulty at all in stating their research problem while (31%) indicate that they

face minimal difficulty. (44.8%) have moderate difficulty and (3.4%) face significant difficulty. None of the participants have severe difficulty. From these results , it can be proved that the majority of students experience a moderate level of difficulty in stating their research problem.

Item b: If you have faced difficulty, explain in what aspect?

The participants who state that they face difficulty in stating research problems have mentioned exactly in what aspect they face the problem. The student's responses can be organized as follows:

▪ Limiting the scope: Seven (7) participants indicated that they face problem in narrowing down the scope of the study as well as perceiving it well.

Convincing the supervisors with the problem :six (6) students has mentioned that they found it difficult to convince their supervisors with their suggested research problems.

Writing issues: Two (2) students revealed that they found a problem finding appropriate vocabulary to state their problem in addition to writing well-structured and coherent paragraph to state their problem. Introduce a relevant research problem: six (6) students indicate that they face difficulty in introducing relevant research problem to the research topic.

Plagiarism: four (4) students considered plagiarism as a challenge. They declared that they sometimes write the same research problems of other dissertations which discuss the same topic.

Item10 : To what extent have you faced difficulty in stating the research aims ?
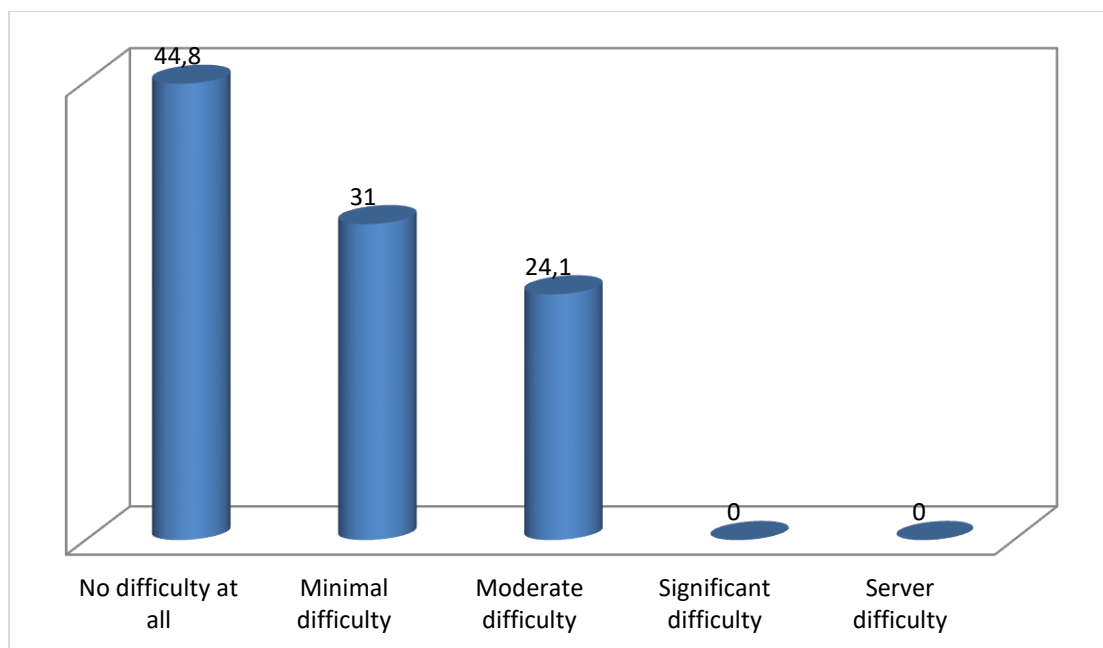
Chart 10: *The extent of facing difficulty in stating the research aims.*

Table 10: *The extent of facing difficulty in stating the research aims.*

Options	frequency	Percentage%
No difficulty at all	13	44.8%
Minimal difficulty	9	31%
Moderate difficulty	7	24.1%
Significant difficulty	0	00%
Server difficulty	0	00%
Total	**29**	**100**

Chart(10) results show that (44.8%) of the participants indicate that they do not face difficulty in stating the research aims.While (31%) agree that they face minimal difficulty and (24.1%) have moderate difficulty. None of the students mentioned significant and severe difficulty. These results show that the majority of students did not face any difficulty concerning stating research aims. However, significant proportions indicated their need for improvement in this task.

Item b: If you have faced difficulty , explain in what aspect?

According to students who indicated that they face problems in stating the research aims. Their responses can be organized as follows:

▪ Narrow down the research aims: eight (8) students mentioned that narrowing the focus of research aims and make them precise is one of the most challenging tasks for them.

▪ Selecting relevant convincible research aim: seven (7) participants stated that they fail in selecting persuasive research aims in research proposal writing.

Section five: Analysis of students difficulties in designing and writing research methodology section

Item11: a- Have you found it challenging to design the methodology for your research proposal?
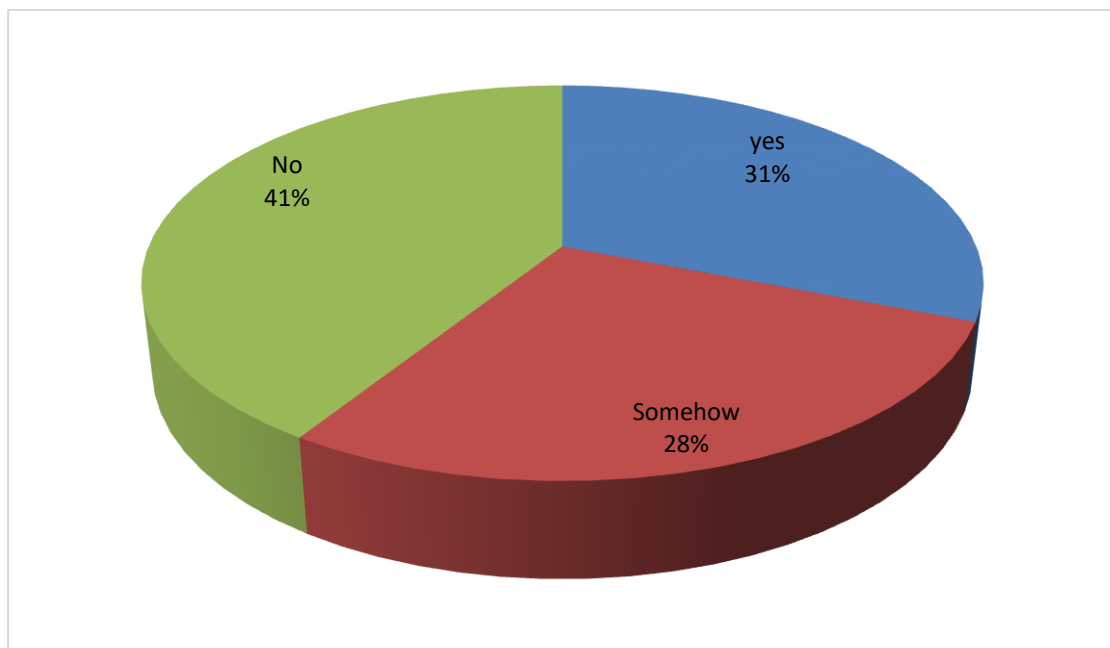
Chart 11: *Students' difficulties in writing research methodology.*

Table11: *Students' difficulties in writing research methodology.*

Options	frequency	percentage%
Yes	09	31%
Somehow	08	28%
No	12	41%
Total	**29**	**100%**

The results of this question showed in this table (11) that most of the students did not face difficulty in writing the research methodology section (41%) which is the majority of the respondents ,answered with "No". (31%) answered with "Yes", a substantial minority which finds this section challenging, indicating a need for assistance in this task. While (28%) answered"Somehow Difficulties".This proportion is a notable portion of students who have moderate difficulties, suggesting that they might benefit from guidance as well.

Item b: What have you found the most difficult about it?

Participants have stated different responses to this question. In order to make those answers well identified we draw certain themes across the different answers of the students. The responses are as follows:

Difficulty in determining the research design: nine (9) students revealed that they struggled with stating appropriate research design for their research study.

Difficulty in designing the methodology: four (4) participants indicated that they face problems in designing the methodology as section in proposal. They revealed that they struggled with mentioning some of its components like (data collection tools, sample.)

Difficulty in determining the nature of study**:** three (3) students declared that determining whether the study is quantitative or qualitative was the most difficult challenge for them. They were confused about choosing the appropriate one.

Difficulty selecting research tools and population: seven (7) students mentioned that they found it difficult choosing appropriate research tools which fit their study and were confused about which population they want to choose .

Item 12 : Have you been able to explain the reasons behind your choice of research design and procedures ?
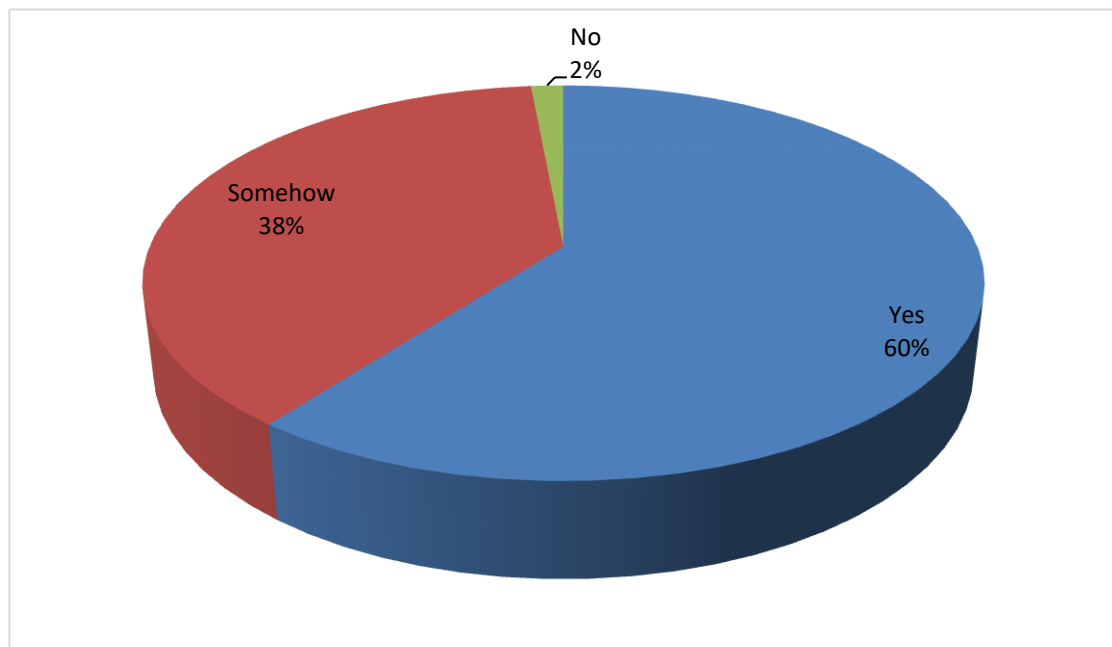
chart12: *Student's ability to explain the reasons behind choosing research design and procedures.*

Table 12: *Student's ability to explain the reasons behind choosing research design and procedures.*

Options	frequency	percentage%
Yes	17	57%
Somehow	10	36%
No	2	07%
Total	**29**	**100%**

Based on the results presented in chart (12) most of participants face difficulty in explaining the reasons behind choosing research design. As 16 students in this questionnaire answered with "yes" while 10 of them answered somehow and only 2 students did not have any problem. It can prove clearly that second master students struggled with explaining the causes of selecting the research design and procedures while writing their proposals.

Section six : Analysis of other difficulties that face students in writing research proposals .

Item 13: To what extent have you faced difficulty in choosing appropriate vocabulary in writing your proposal?
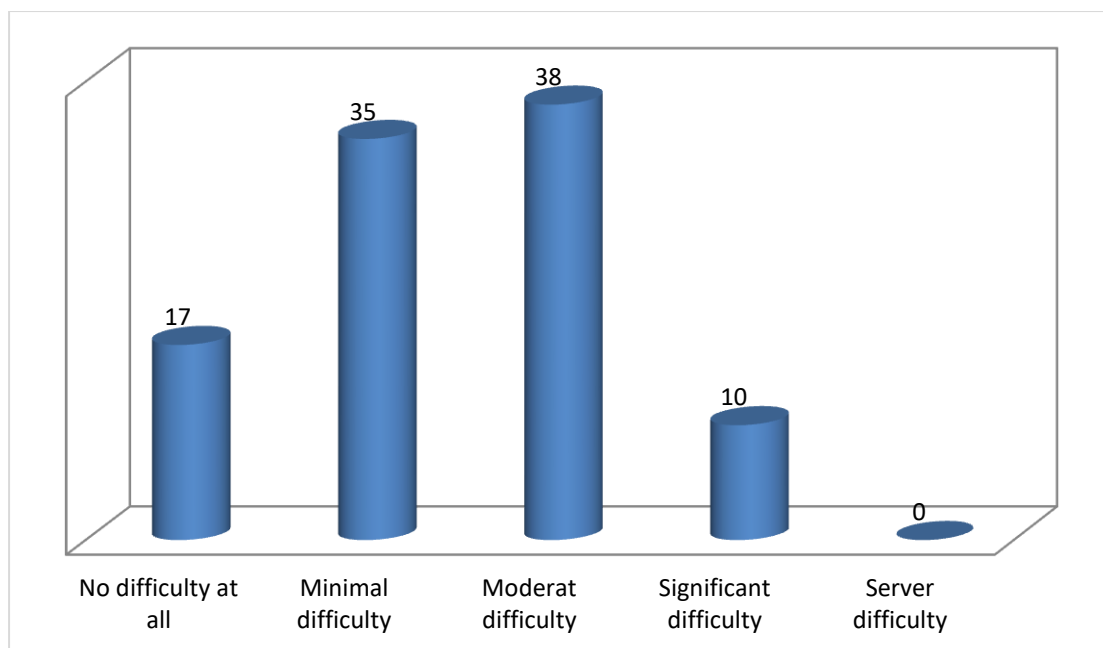
Chart 13: *The extent of facing difficulty in choosing appropriate vocabulary.*

Table 13: *The extent of facing difficulty in choosing appropriate vocabulary.*

Options	frequency	Percentage%
No difficulty at all	5	17%
Minimal difficulty	10	35%
Moderate difficulty	11	38%
Significant difficulty	3	10%
Server difficulty	0	00%
Total	**29**	**100**

The results shown through the chart (13) indicate that (17%) of the students do not face difficulty at all . While (35%) answered that they have minimal difficulty, (38%) face moderate difficulty and (10%) indicated that they face significant difficulty. None of the students mentioned that they faced severe difficulty. Based on the results, a significant proportion indicated that they find it slightly difficult to use accurate and appropriate terms in their writing of proposal.

Item 14: Have faced problems in writing mechanics (applying grammatical rules, appropriate punctuation, correct spelling and correct sentence structure) during the research proposal writing?
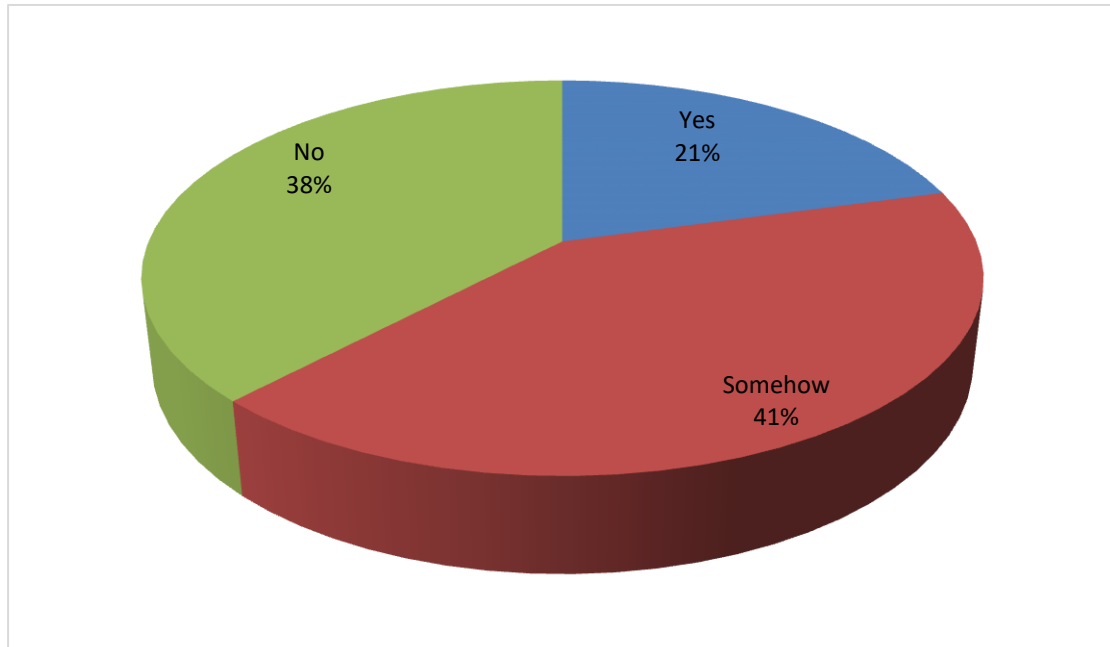
Chart 14: *Student's problems in writing mechanics.*

Table 14: *Student's problems in writing mechanics.*

Options	frequency	percentage%
Yes	6	21%
Somehow	12	41%
No	11	38%
Total	**29**	**100%**

Depending on table (14) ,the results showed that 12 of participants answered with "somehow" while 11 answered with "No" and 6 of them answered with "yes". These results indicate that the majority of the students experienced moderate difficulties in writing mechanics

Item 14: What have you found the most difficult of them**?**

According to students who answered this question most of them indicated that:

▪ Writing correct sentence structure : seven (7) participants stated that they face difficulty in writing the structure of sentences .They relate it to write incomplete sentences and patterns.

Applying grammatical rules: five (5) of participants stated they struggled with grammatical mistakes like applying correct tenses, punctuation .

Item 15: Have you struggled with understanding your supervisor's feedback and making the required modifications regarding your proposal?
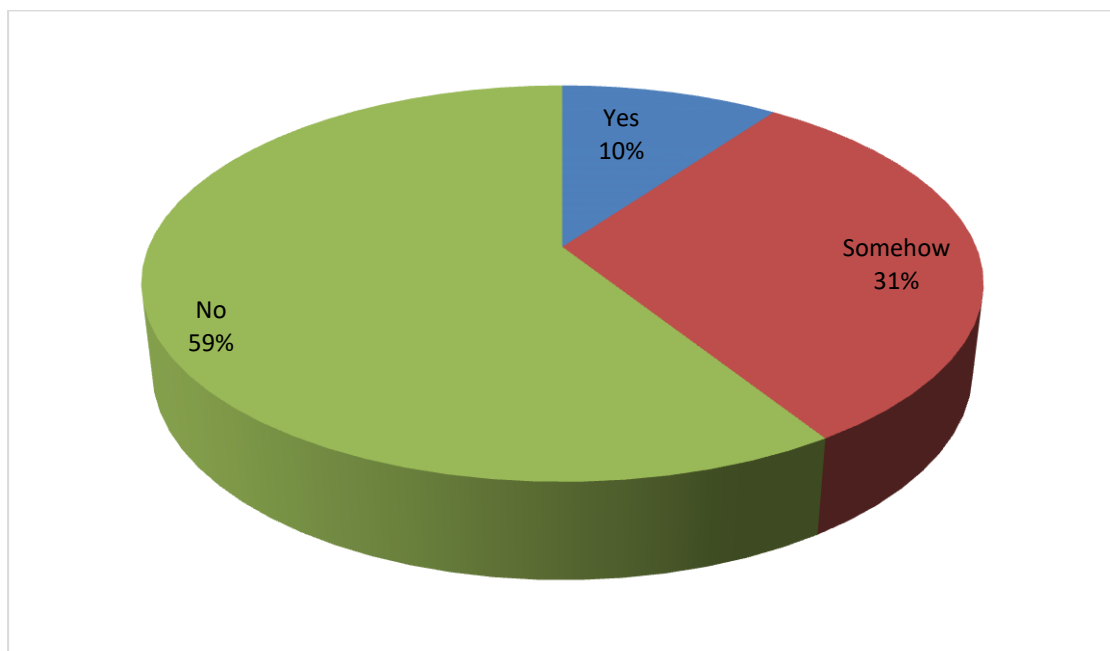
Chart 15: *the students' difficulties in understanding supervisor's feedback.*

Table 15 *the students' difficulties in understanding supervisor's feedback.*

Options	frequency	percentage%
Yes	3	10%
Somehow	9	31%
No	17	59%
Total	**29**	**100%**

The chart (15) shows the students' responses about understanding the supervisors' feedback, (59%) which is the majority answered with "No" and (31%) answered somehow. Only (10%) stated "yes" . It can be concluded that the majority of participants did not face any difficulties with the feedback of their supervisors and making modifications on their proposals.

Item 16: Have you faced difficulties in finding sufficient materials and receiving adequate help from lectures**?**
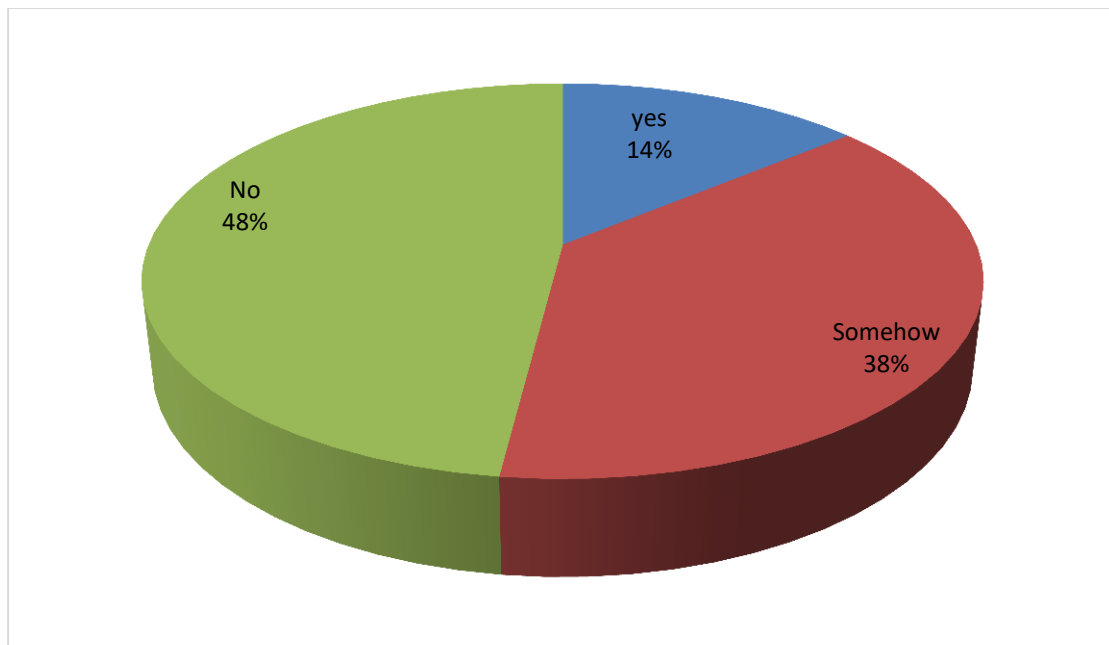
Chart 16*: the   students' difficulties in finding sufficient materials and receiving adequate help from lectures.*

Table 16*: the students' difficulties in finding sufficient materials and receiving adequate help from lectures.*

Options	frequency	percentage%
Yes	4	14%
Somehow	11	38%
No	14	48%
Total	**29**	**100%**

Based on the table above, the results show that most participants did not face difficulty in receiving help from their lectures and finding sufficient materials. Where (48%) answered with "No". (38%) answered with "somehow ", meaning that a considerable portion experiences some challenges, indicating a need for more consistent support or easier access to materials.

A minority of students , (14%) answered with "yes" indicating that they struggle significantly in this area , highlighting the necessity for enhanced support.

Item 17: Could you state other difficulties that you have faced in the stage of designing and writing your research proposal**?**

Based on the participants' responses to this question it can be indicated that students face other difficulties in writing and designing their research proposals. The responses are categorized as follows:

Writing clear research objectives: seven (7) participants state that they face difficulty in stating and clarifying research objectives in research proposal writing.

Academic writing challenges: five (5) students state that they struggled with problems in citation and plagiarism where they add views of experts in their proposals without awareness of the citation rules.

Methodology challenges: three (3) students indicate that they have problems with finalizing and completing their methodology section in the proposal.

Literature review challenges: two (2) students revealed that they struggled with mentioning the appropriate information which can be significant for their study.

Section seven: Analysis of the reasons behind difficulties in writing and designing research proposals.

Item 18: According to your experience, what are the reasons that make students struggle with research proposal designing and writing**?**

According to students' answers to this question,the reasons of those difficulties can be themed as follows:

Experience reasons: nine (9) students revealed that one of the main reasons behind students' difficulties in writing proposals are due to lack of practical experience and limited research skills of the students.

Personal reasons: eight (8) students justified the difficulties by the lack of motivation and excessive fear of failure in writing their proposals.

Writing reasons: four (4) participants revealed that they have poor level in writing. According to them ,their failure in proposal writing is related to the lack of knowledge about appropriate terminology and grammar rules.

 Item 19: In your opinion, how can students avoid such difficulties?

Second Master's students have suggested different solutions in order to avoid committing mistakes and facing difficulties in the process of writing research proposals. The solutions are as follows:

Practice solutions: eleven (11) of the participants in this study suggested for the students who will write research proposals to practice as much as they can, by

checking previous proposals and keep looking for relevant articles and academic books which provide tips on how to write effective research proposals.

Supervising- related solutions: nine (9) of students indicated that students must follow the supervisor's directions and take them into consideration and ask help from them to make progress in their proposals.

Lecture -related solutions: nine (9) participants revealed that students must acquire good level and skills in the course of research methodology , where they suggest to other students to attend the courses of research methodology and read authoritative books which are related to research.

4.3. Discussion of the Students' Questionnaire

The investigation provided results of the different difficulties that Master's students face in writing a research proposal. The study revealed that students struggle with writing introduction, literature review, statement of problem, and research methodology in varying degrees and in different aspects of these sections. Additionally, some difficulties are associated with writing mechanics. The investigation also aimed to find out the different reasons behind these difficulties which can be related to limited experience in research writing skills, in addition to some personal factors experienced by the students.

Concerning the difficulties related to introduction writing, the majority of participants indicated that they face moderate difficulty in providing enough background information to support their introduction. However, they demonstrated that they were able to state the nature of the research concisely and clearly in the introduction. Moreover, participants indicated that they experienced difficulty in the literature review writing and specifically in selecting relevant literature and reviewing previous research. Furthermore, participants reported difficulty in formulating and

stating the research problem and aims where they highlighted challenges related to the task of developing a clear background to the research problem. They reported having problems in stating their research problem and limiting its scope. Concerning the stating the research aims results, the majority of participants demonstrated no significant challenge except few students who explained that they find it difficult to state aims that are precise.

Concerning challenges related to methodology writing the majority of participants identified that they write methodology sections successfully without difficulties; however, some of them stated that they struggled with determining the research design while others related the difficulty in designing the methodology and determining the research nature in addition to selecting research tools and choosing appropriate population for the study. Students also indicated that the majority struggled with justifying the selection of certain research designs and procedures. Concerning the other challenges students encountered while writing their proposals, participants revealed that they faced moderate difficulty in choosing appropriate vocabulary while they experienced some difficulty in writing mechanics especially in writing correct sentence structure and applying grammatical rules. Moreover, the majority of participants explained that they did not struggle with any kind of difficulties while dealing with their supervisor's feedback and receiving adequate help from lectures which demonstrated clearly that students followed teachers' instructions and suggestions. The participants mentioned the reasons behind the difficulties they faced while writing and designing their proposals which were associated with a lack of student experience and limited research skills in addition to personal reasons like lack of motivation and fear of failure . Academic writing difficulties were related to lack of appropriate terminology in research methodology and research topic and lack

of vocabulary and applying grammar rules. Students suggested certain solutions to avoid committing such difficulties in proposal writing. The provided solutions included practicing writing proposals following supervisors' instructions and considering them. Additionally, they suggested observing well how research proposals of previous research works are crafted and benefit from such observation. In addition, the students stress the importance of building good level and skills in research methodology by attending their Research Methodology courses.

5. The Supervisors' Interviews

5.1. Description of the supervisors' interviews

An interview was used as a data collection tool. The main aim of the interview is to explore the different perceptions of the supervisors concerning the difficulties in writing research proposals. The researcher has planned open-ended questions to allow the supervisor to provide detailed answers to the interviewer.

The interview consists of 11 questions that aim to gather detailed answers and different perceptions about the difficulties in writing research proposals and the different reasons behind these difficulties. In addition, the interviewees were asked to suggest measures to avoid such difficulties and to improve students' skills in writing their proposals. The interview was made with 5 teachers at the department of English at the university of Mohammed khider Biskra who supervise second Master' s students in their research work.

5.2.Administration

The interview targets teachersof English who supervise Masters' students at the University of Mohammed Khider of Biskra .The researcher interviewed five teachers two of interviews were face to face meetings and the others were sent via email.

5. 3. Analysis of the supervisors' interviews

Item 1: How many years' of experience do you have in supervising Masters student's research work ?

The first item aims to determine the teachers experience in supervising Masters' students

Interviewee A: " 10 years"

Interviewee B: " 10 years"

interviewee C: " 05 years"

*interviewee D: "*04 years"

interviewee E: " 05 years"

The interviewees' experience varies between ten and five years . It can be indicated that they have considerable level of experience in supervision making their responses experience -based.

Item 2 : What difficulties do students usually face when introducing their research topic?

The rationale for this item is to highlight the main difficulties students face while introducing their research topic

Interviewee A: " choices and outline"

Interviewee B: " general and vague topics"

interviewee C: "outline the research problem"

interviewee D: " they find it hard to provide proper context to introduce the research problem"

interviewee E: " provide a context "

After analyzing the answers of the question , most of the interviewees stated that their students have problems when introducing their research topic specifically, that they cannot outline the topic well ,where they choose general and vague topics. In addition , they revealed that students have difficulty in providing proper context to introduce the research problem. The students' difficulties in introducing their research topic can be as follows:

▪ Outlining the research topic.

▪ Providing context to the research problem.

Item 3: According to your supervision experience, what are the most difficult sections of the research proposals that students design and write?

This item seeks to know supervisors' perceptions about the difficult section their students struggle with in writing their proposals.

Interviewee A: " literature review"

Interviewee B: " Methodology section"

interviewee C: " Methodology"

interviewee D: " Methodology and introduction "

interviewee E: " introduction section"

All the interviewees agreed on one point which is that the most difficult sections for students to write and design are the methodology ,the introduction and literature review section.

Item 4: What do students usually struggle with when doing the literature review task in order to improve their research problem?

This item aims to know the teachers views about the difficult task students face while writing the literature review

Interviewee A: " They do not know how to write it"

Interviewee B: " They do not write it well "

interviewee C: " finding the gap in the literature "

interviewee D: " writing appropriate review "

interviewee E: " writing appropriate criticism"

After gathering supervisors' responses ,they remark that students' problems in writing literature review consisted of not knowing how to write. Furthermore , teachers relate students' problems to finding the literature gap ,writing appropriate reviews and criticism. In addition to writing references .So that the student's difficulties can be categorized as follows:

- lack of knowledge on how to write literature reviews.

- Identifying the gap.

- Providing appropriate criticism.

Item 5: Do students encounter difficulties when stating the research problem and research aims? What are they?

This item attempts to know the students difficulties in stating research problem and aims according to supervisors observation

Interviewee A: " they do not differentiate between the aim of research and research problem"

Interviewee B: " They don't specify the research aims "

interviewee C: "They don't write it in precise language"

interviewee D: " introducing the focus of the problem"

interviewee E: " They struggle to write in precise language using research methodology terminology"

The supervisors seem to agree that students experience difficulties in stating the research problem and aims because they do not differentiate between the aim of research and the research problem. In addition, they cannot specify the aims and write in precise language. They also have problems introducing the focus of the problem. The students' problems in stating the research problem and aims are as follows:

- Using precise language to introduce the focus of the problem and specifically the aims

- Distinguishing between the aims and problems.

Item 6 : What are the main challenges students' encounter in writing the methodology section of their research proposals?

Interviewee A: " stating suitable method"

Interviewee B: " difficulty in how to collect data"

interviewee C: " difficulty in sampling"

interviewee D: "* writing the research design"

interviewee E:" confused between the methodology and its components"

Based on the supervisors' responses students' challenges lay in stating suitable methods, how to collect data, sampling and writing the research design. In addition, students confuse the methodology and the components. It can be concluded that students struggle with:

- Difficulty in stating clear methodology

- Difficulty in sampling and data collection tools

- Difficulty in designing methodology section

Item 7: from your observations, what are the typical difficulties students encounter in writing mechanics and appropriate use of language?

Interviewee A: " grammar mistakes"

Interviewee B: " problem of parallelism"

interviewee C: "They commits grammatical mistakes"

interviewee D:"They don't pay attention to parallelism"

interviewee E: " grammar mistakes"

According to teachers' responses, students have difficulties in writing mechanics. Three teachers declared that the students committed grammar mistakes while two teachers revealed that the students face problems in parallelism and writing academically. Therefore, students' difficulties in relation to writing mechanics can be categorized as follows:

- Difficulties in grammar
- Difficulties in academic writing

Item 8 : Do students find difficulties seeking your help and feedback?

Interviewee A: "NO"

Interviewee B: " They do not"

interviewee C: " Totally no"

interviewee D: " No I don't think so . I'm always available for my students questions"

interviewee E: "They don't face any difficulty"

According to the supervisors' responses to this question, all the teachers demonstrated that their students did not face any difficulty in seeking help and feedback from them .

Item 9 : How do students respond to your feedback and correction?

Interviewee A: " They follow my directions"

Interviewee B: " They listen carefully "

interviewee C: " They rectify what needs to be corrected"

interviewee D: "They try to follow the instructions"

interviewee E: " Positively"

Most of the interviewees stated that their students' reaction to their instructions is positive where they listen carefully and rectify what needs to be corrected . In addition , they follow the supervisors' instructions and directions.

Item 10 : In your opinion, what are the reasons behind the student's difficulties in writing a research proposal?

The researcher intended to know the supervisors perspectives regarding the reasons behind the students difficulties in writing research proposal

Interviewee A: " Lack of practice"

Interviewee B: " lack of practice in research methodology"

interviewee C: " lack of reading"

interviewee D: " lack f research background"

interviewee E: " lack of practice in academic writing"

According to supervisors words , the reasons behind the difficulties in writing proposals are related to lack of practice in research methodology and academic writing. In addition to the lack of reading and research background.

Item 11: what do you suggest as measures to avoid such difficulties and to improve research proposal writing?

The last item aims to investigate the different suggested solutions by supervisors to their students in order to improve their research proposal writing

Interviewee A: " they need to know more about methodology"

Interviewee B: " get more training"

interviewee C:" by reading"

interviewee D:" writing as much they can"

interviewee E :" get more feedback about it"

Concerning the last question about giving solutions to students to avoid the difficulties.   Teachers insisted that students need to know more about the methodology, get more training and feedback about research proposal . In addition to reading and writing as much as they can.

5.3. Discussion of Teachers' Interviews

The investigation also provided results of difficulties in writing research proposals according to Master students' supervisors. The teachers pointed out that the students experience various difficulties in different sections in the proposal. In the introduction, a statement of the problem , research aims, a literature review, and a methodology section.

In terms of introduction writing , teachers revealed that many of the students were not able to outline their research topic's focus, often providing vague and too general topics. Additionally, they failed to provide appropriate context to their research problem. Concerning the literature review, teachers indicated that students face difficulties in identifying the gap and providing appropriate literature while others relate it to the lack of knowledge on how to write the review as part of the research proposal. Moreover, teachers revealed in the interview responses that students were not able to state the research problem and distinguish between the aims and the research problem.

Concerning the difficulties related to research methodology writing, teachers indicated that students struggled with stating a clear methodology to their proposals. In addition, they struggle with problems in sampling, data collection tools and designing methodology sections.

Regarding the task of writing mechanics, teachers demonstrated that students had trouble with grammar mistakes and academic writing like problems of parallelism . The supervisors explained that students did not face any difficulty in seeking their help and they indicated that students' reactions were positive following their instructions. Additionally, teachers explain that students have difficulties in writing research proposals due to a lack of knowledge about research methodology, academic writing rules, and research background. Based on those reasons teachers suggest some solutions to the students to achieve the aim of writing effective proposals. Those solutions were related to knowing the research methodology and getting training on it in addition to practicing reading and writing.

Based on the results of both the students' questionnaires and supervisors' interviews. It can be concluded that the students encounter different challenges in writing research proposals. The challenges can be attributed to different sections and tasks in the research proposal writing. The students find it difficult to provide background information to support their introduction and contextualize their research problem. They also find it difficult to move from the general to the specific to limit the scope of their topic and highlight the precise focus of their research problem. The students also struggle with selecting appropriate bibliography to the topic for the aim of doing the literature review, they also struggle with providing criticism to the literature related to the topic and consequently they are unable to find the literature gap. The observations of the supervisors and the self-assessment of the students indicate that they find designing the methodology section challenging, they believe it is difficult for them to choose appropriate research design and methods. They also find it difficult to justify the choices in their proposal. Elements of writing, specifically applying correct grammatical rules and formulating correct sentences

were also highlighted as common difficulties that students experience in the proposal writing. Both supervisors and students indicated that the primary reasons for these difficulties are the lack of knowledge and practical experience with research methodology and academic writing. Teachers highlighted the importance of familiarity with the target topic background to avoid topic- related difficulties while students highlighted personal factors such as motivation and stress that is related to the fear of failure. Both students and supervisors proposed a number of solutions to deal with the difficulties. They stress on the importance of practicing reading and writing and especially in the research methodology field. They also insist on attending methodology classes and receiving feedback on the writing practice.

Conclusion

Chapter two focused on the fieldwork conducted for the study. This chapter included research methodology ,data analysis and discussion of the findings. The primary goal of this chapter was to thoroughly examine and discuss the data collected from students' questionnaires and teachers' interviews.

The questionnaire was distributed to Masters' students at the English department of Mohamed Khider Biskra University. The main aim of the questionnaire was to highlight the difficulties related to writing research proposals and gather insights into students' perceptions towards those challenges. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted to obtain the views of supervisors concerning the challenges that students face . The chapter concludes that M2 students' encounter different challenges in writing their proposals in varying sections. The difficulties include providing background information in the introduction , difficulties in writing statement of the problem and contextualizing and stating specific research problem, difficulties in writing literature review and identify literature gaps, difficulties in designing the

methodology section and choosing appropriate research methods. In addition, they face difficulties related to writing mechanics, grammatical accuracy and sentence formulation. The reasons of difficulties are related to lack of practical experience and lack   of   knowledge   and   academic   writing.

Conclusion:

General conclusion

The present study investigates the difficulties that face Master's students in writing research proposals at the Department of English at Biskra University. It also investigates the reasons behind those difficulties. Three main questions were addressed:

Q1: What are the different perceptions and views of Master's students at the Department of English Mohammed Khider University concerning the difficulties they face in writing research proposals?

Q2: What are the different perceptions of the students' supervisors at the University of Mohammed Khider Biskra in the English department concerning those difficulties?

Q3: What are the reasons behind the difficulties that second master students face at the English department in writing their research proposal?

To address the previous research questions, the researcher employed an exploratory research design with mixed-methods approach because it serves the nature of the study. The researcher collected the data through a semi-structured questionnaire and an structured interview. The dissertation is organized into two main chapters, the first chapter offers theoretical background on research proposal writing. It is composed of two sections. The first section is an overview of the research proposal which discusses its definition and essential components. While the second section deals with previous studies related to difficulties in writing research proposals. The second chapter represents the methodology of the research, the analysis and the discussion of the results, as well as the summary of the findings .

The study indicates several challenges that Master's students face in writing research proposals , including difficulties in providing background information, contextualizing their research problem, limiting the scope of the topic, and stating a specific research problem. Students also struggle with selecting relevant literature, doing literature review and identifying literature gaps. Designing the methodology section, choosing appropriate research methods and justifying these choices are also among the challenges the students face. Additionally, students struggle with grammatical accuracy and sentence formulation. The primary reasons for these difficulties are a lack of knowledge and practical experience with research methodology and academic writing, as well as personal factors like motivation and stress.To address these challenges, both students and supervisors emphasize the importance of practicing reading and writing, attending methodology classes, and receiving feedback on their work.

Limitations of study

Even though the predetermined objectives of the study were accomplished, it faced some difficulties and limitations that should be stated. The main limitation that the researcher identifies is the limited sample size.Some students answered sarcastically to the questionnaire questions while others provided irrelevant responses which had no relation to the content of questions. Moreover some teachers refused completely to have an interview with the researcher without any justifications and some of them asked to answer it online after that they refused to answer.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the findings of the current study, the following suggestions for further research are indicate:

- A longitudinal study could be conducted based on the study's results to examine the challenges further.

- Experimental studies could be done to test different interventions to address students' difficulties in research proposal writing.

Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the current study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Supervisors of Master's students need to anticipate the difficulties the students have and offer strategies to help students avoid them.

- Both, curriculum designers and teachers, should consider these difficulties while designing the Research Methodology and Academic Writing modules and lectures.

- Teachers can help students address these challenges by presenting academic workshops and training that focus on and address these issues.

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Appendices

Appendix 01:

<p style="text-align:center">STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE</p>

The current questionnaire aims to explore the difficulties in writing research proposals faced by Master's students in Sciences of the Language at the department of English at the University of Mohammed Khider Biskra. Your responses are highly appreciated and will contribute significantly to understanding and addressing these challenges.

Please tick the appropriate box (es) and make complete statements whenever necessary. Be sure that your responses will be anonymous and will be used for research purposes only.

Thank you for your participation.

Section one: Background Information:

Q1. How old are you?

☐17-20 ☐21-23 ☐Older than 24

Q2. How do you consider your level in English?

☐Excellent ☐Good ☐Average ☐Poor

Q3. How well did you do in your research methodology course?

☐Excellent

☐Very well

☐Moderately well

☐Not very well

☐Poorly

Q4. How well did you do in your academic writing course?

☐Excellent

☐Very well

☐Moderately well

☐Not very well

☐Poorly

Section two: Difficulties in writing the introduction section

Q5. How well were you able to provide enough background information to support your introduction?

☐Excellent

☐Very well

☐Moderately well

☐Not very well

☐Poorly

Q6. How well do you feel you can state the nature of your research in the introduction?

☐Excellent

☐Very well

☐Moderately well

☐Not very well

☐Poorly

Section three: Difficulties in writing the literature review section

Q7. Which of the following tasks have you struggled with?

☐ Selecting relevant literature for your review.

☐Using current and updated sources for your literature review.

☐Reviewing previous research in your research proposal and providing appropriate criticism.

☐ Establishing the significance of your research by indicating a gap in previous research.

☐Limiting the scope of the study.

☐ Synthesizing previous research with your own study.

Section four: Difficulties in formulating and stating the research problem and the research aims

Q8. Have you faced difficulty in developing a clear background of the research problem?

☐Yes

☐ Somehow

☐ No

Q9. a-To what extent have you faced difficulty in stating the research problem?

☐No difficulty at all

☐Minimal difficulty

☐Moderate difficulty

☐Significant difficulty

☐ Severe difficulty

b- If you have faced difficulty, explain in what aspect?

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Q10. a-To what extent have you faced difficulty in formulating the research aims?

☐No difficulty at all

☐Minimal difficulty

☐Moderate difficulty

☐Significant difficulty

☐ Severe difficulty

b- If you have faced difficulty, explain in what

aspect? ……………………………………………………………………………………………

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Section five: Difficulties in designing and writing the research methodology section.

Q11. a- Have you found it challenging to design the methodology for your research

proposal?

☐Yes

☐Somehow

☐No

b- what have you found the most difficult about it?

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Q12. Have you been able to explain the reasons behind your choice of research design

and procedures?

☐Yes

☐Somehow

☐No

Section six: Other difficulties

Q13. To what extent have you faced difficulty in choosing appropriate vocabulary in

writing your proposal?

☐No difficulty at all

☐Minimal difficulty

☐Moderate difficulty

☐Significant difficulty

☐ Severe difficulty

Q14. a- Have you faced problems in writing mechanics (applying grammatical rules, appropriate punctuation, correct spelling and correct sentence structure) during the research proposal writing?

☐Yes

☐Somehow

☐No

b- what have you found the most difficult of them?

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Q15. Have you struggled in understanding your supervisor's feedback and making the required modifications regarding your proposal?

☐Yes

☐Somehow

☐No

Q16. Have you faced difficulties in finding sufficient materials and receiving adequate help from lectures?

☐Yes

☐Somehow

☐No

Q17. Could you state other difficulties that you have faced in the stage of designing and writing you research proposal? …………………………………………………………………………………

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Section seven: the reasons behind the difficulties that face students in designing and writing their research proposals

Q18. According to your experience, what are the reasons that make students struggle with research proposal designing and writing? …………………………………………………………………………

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In your opinion, how can students avoid such difficulties?

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Appendix 02:

Investigation into the difficulties in writing research proposals

TEACHERS' INTERVIEW

Dear teacher,

This interview aims to explore the difficulties that Master's students face in writing their research proposals, your insights and responses are greatly valued and will be carefully considered in our research.

Thank you sincerely for dedicating your time to participate in this interview. It is an honor to have you contribute and share your valuable knowledge and experience in student's supervision.

Student's name: …………………….

Q1. How many years of experience do you have in supervising Master's students research work?

Q2. According to your supervision experience, what are the most difficult sections of the research proposal that students design and write?

Q3. What difficulties do students usually face when introducing their research topic?

Q4. What do students usually struggle with when doing the literature review task in order to improve their research problem?

Q5. Do students encounter difficulties when stating the research problem and the research aims? What are they?

Q6. What are the main challenges students encounter in writing the methodology section of their research proposals?

Q7. From your observations, what are the typical difficulties students encounter in writing mechanics and appropriate use of language?

Q8. Do students find difficulties seeking your help and feedback?

Q9. How do students respond to your feedback and correction?

Q10. In your opinion, what are the reasons behind the students' difficulties in writing research proposals?

Q11. What do you suggest as measures to avoid such difficulties and to improve research proposal wiring?

الملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على الصعوبات التي تواجه طلبة المرحلة الثانية ماجستير بجامعة محمد الخضر بسكرة في كتابة مقترحاتهم البحثية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإنه يستكشف الأسباب الكامنة وراء تلك الصعوبات. ولتحقيق هذه الأهداف تم استخدام تصميم البحث الاستكشافي بأسلوب مختلط يسعى إلى جمع البيانات من كلا النوعين، الكمية والنوعية. للإجابة على أسئلة البحث المقصودة، تم استخدام استبيان شبه منظم للطلاب ومقابلة للمعلمين كأدوات لجمع البيانات. وبناء على ذلك، شارك في هذا البحث (العدد = 29) طالبا و (العدد = 5) مدرسين. تم استخدام التحليل الوصفي والموضوعي لتحليل البيانات التي تم الحصول عليها من الاستبيان والمقابلة. تشير النتائج إلى أن كلا من الطلاب والمعلمين يدركون أن الطلاب يواجهون صعوبات في كتابة أقسام مقترح البحث. وتشمل الصعوبات توفير معلومات أساسية لكتابة المقدمات، ووضع سياق وتوضيح مشاكل البحث المحددة، واختيار مراجعة الأدبيات ذات الصلة، وتحديد فجوة الأدبيات، وتصميم منهجية البحث واختيار طرق البحث المناسبة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يواجه الطلاب بعض التحديات المتعلقة بالدقة النحوية وصياغة الجملة. ويشير التحقيق إلى أن أسباب تلك الصعوبات ترتبط بقلة الخبرة العملية في كتابة المقترحات البحثية. بالإضافة إلى نقص المعرفة بالمنهجية والكتابة الأكاديمية، وكذلك العوامل الشخصية مثل عدم وجود الدافع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كتابة مقترحات البحث، صعوبات الكتابة

Résumé

Cette étude vise à enquêter sur les difficultés auxquelles sont confrontés les étudiants de deuxième Master de l'Université Mohammed Khider Biskra dans la rédaction de leurs propositions de recherche. En outre, il explore les raisons de ces difficultés. Pour atteindre ces objectifs, un plan de recherche exploratoire a été utilisé avec une approche à méthodes mixtes qui cherche à collecter des données des deux types, quantitatives et qualitatives. Pour répondre aux questions de recherche envisagées, un questionnaire semi-structuré destiné aux étudiants et un entretien destiné aux enseignants ont été utilisés comme outils de collecte de données. En conséquence, (N=29) étudiants et (N=5) enseignants ont participé à cette enquête. Des analyses descriptives et thématiques ont été utilisées pour analyser les données obtenues à partir du questionnaire et de l'entretien. Les résultats indiquent que les étudiants et les enseignants reconnaissent que les étudiants rencontrent des difficultés dans la rédaction de sections de la proposition de recherche. Les difficultés comprennent la fourniture d'informations de base pour rédiger des introductions, la contextualisation et l'énoncé de problèmes de recherche spécifiques, la sélection d'une revue de la littérature pertinente, l'identification des lacunes dans la littérature, la conception de la méthodologie de la recherche et le choix des méthodes de recherche appropriées. De plus, les étudiants sont confrontés à certains défis liés à l'exactitude grammaticale et à la formulation des phrases. L'enquête indique que les raisons de ces difficultés sont liées au manque d'expérience pratique dans la rédaction de propositions de recherche. Outre le manque de connaissances en méthodologie et en rédaction académique, ainsi que des facteurs personnels tels que le manque de motivation.

Mots-clés : rédaction d'une proposition de recherche, difficultés de rédaction

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كلية الأداب و اللغـات

قسم الأداب و اللغات الأجنبية

قسم الانجليزية

رخصة إيداع مذكرة التخرج الدورة الاستدراكية للسنة الدراسية ٢٠٢٤/٢٣٢٠

أنا الممضي أسفله الأستاذ(ة) : **Meriam GHENNAI**

الرتبة: M.A.A

اسمح للطالب:

الإسم واللقب: **Samiha DJEMMANI** تخصص: Sciences of the Language.

بإيداع مذكرة التخرج تحت عنوان:

An Investigation into the Difficulties in Writing Research Proposals

The case of Master's Students of English at the University of Mohammed

khider Biskra

للسنة الدراسية ٢٠٢٤/٢٠٢٣ وذلك في الفترة الممتدة من ٢٤ إلى ٠٤ جوان ٢٠٢٤.

إمضاء الأستاذ المشرف