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Investigating English as a foreign Language Learners' Commonest Challenge among
Vocabulary, Grammar, and Spelling when Developing their Written Productions:

The Case of Third Year Students of English at Biskra University

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
Master Degree in Science of Language

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Declaration

I, Ines DIDICHE, hereby declare that this MA dissertation is my own original work and the result of my very own efforts. Except where proper references are provided, all content in this dissertation is my own and has not been authored or published by anyone else. This work has not been submitted to any other university or institution in pursuit of a degree or any other qualification.

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Dedication

*In memory of my dearest father, who left us too soon, who left me but a confused and clueless
young adult, and who adored listening to The Beatles and watching space documentaries.*

I dedicate this to you; I hope you are watching over me with a proud smile across your face.

To my precious mother, whose sheer presence carried me through thick and thin.

*To myself, who persevered through insurmountable grief and sorrow, stood unshaken amidst
the crash of my own world, and labored to create a bright side to look at.*

To the makers of Red Dead Redemption 2, thank you for the life-changing experience.

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Abstract

Writing holds a paramount position in English as a Foreign Language (Henceforth, EFL) learning, yet many students tend to display a negative attitude towards it, as they often find it difficult and unrewarding. This study investigated the relative challenges posed by vocabulary, grammar, and spelling in EFL students' writing, with the goal of identifying the one aspect among them that most challenged students when writing. This study adopts the pragmatism paradigm, which corresponds with its mixed-methods approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches within a case study design. Data collection involved proficiency tests to assess vocabulary, grammar, and spelling, alongside a semi-structured questionnaire for teachers to provide insights into writing challenges and teaching procedures. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics for the test scores and thematic analysis for the questionnaire responses. The sample consisted of 30 students and 6 teachers, both selected through convenience sampling to ensure availability and accessibility of participants. The findings revealed that spelling was the most difficult aspect for students, as reflected by their notably lower scores in the spelling test compared to grammar and vocabulary, and a mean score of $M = 7.9$ out of 40. Despite this, teachers reported viewing all three aspects—vocabulary, grammar, and spelling—as equally important in writing instruction. However, their responses subtly suggested that spelling received less instructional attention in practice, commonly being overshadowed by grammar and vocabulary. The study put forward the need to integrate spelling instruction more deliberately alongside vocabulary due to their interconnectedness, and to allocate more instructional time to writing. It also highlighted the influence of classroom constraints such as large student numbers and limited feedback opportunities. The findings presented practical implications for curriculum planning, classroom assessment, and teacher training, and suggested new directions for future research aimed at refining writing instruction in EFL contexts.

Keywords: EFL writing, Grammar, Spelling, Teacher perceptions, Vocabulary,
Writing challenges

List of Acronyms

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

FLL: Foreign Language Learning

APA: American Psychological Association

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

TL: Target Language

MCQ: Multiple Choice Question

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

PDP: Parallel Distributed Processing

MM: Mixed Methods

QUAL: Qualitative

QUAN: Quantitative

EAP: English for Academic Purposes

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

CALL: Computer-Assisted Writing Approach

WCF: Written Corrective Feedback

VHS: Vocational High School

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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

In the realm of English as a Foreign Language (Henceforth, EFL) learning, proficiency in written communication is of insurmountable significance. Being one of the two productive skills, the writing skill is the principal pillar of a learner's academic journey, for it is exhausted throughout the entirety of it, and is the determiner of not only their success as learners, but also their value as researchers. The process of writing in a foreign language is complex and multidimensional, often requiring learners to simultaneously focus on content, language form, and the conventions of written discourse. That is to say, all EFL learners are bound to face obstacles in their writing at some point or another, because it is such a complex process that involves multiple aspects simultaneously.

The aforementioned aspects of writing that are of interest for this research are grammar, spelling, and vocabulary. As it is commonly-known, in order to fix an issue, one must first know the source of said issue for a targeted, effective, and swift fix. Therefore, those three aspects need to be individually recognized and addressed, in order to minimize the struggle EFL learners face while writing, and also pinpoint exactly what the source of their struggle is. Doing so is also helpful for educators and researchers to illuminate the intricacies of foreign language learning (Henceforth, FLL), as well as guide the development of tailored instructions and problem-specific solutions.

Several studies have explored the relationship between these three language components (vocabulary, grammar, and spelling) and writing proficiency. Mahmudah (2014) found a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.696$) between vocabulary mastery and writing ability among eighth-grade students in Indonesia, using vocabulary and writing tests based on the same film to show that better vocabulary knowledge enhances writing performance.

Similarly, Rajabi and Dezhkam (2014) demonstrated the impact of explicit grammar instruction on writing accuracy through an experimental study with Iranian EFL learners; the group receiving targeted grammar lessons outperformed the control group, confirming the value of direct grammar teaching. In a related vein, Albeshier (2018) examined spelling errors among Saudi EFL university students and found that interlingual and intralingual factors, such as phonemic confusion and overgeneralization, largely affect spelling, which in turn impairs writing proficiency. His qualitative study, supported by teacher interviews, recommended strategies like phonological training and corrective feedback to enhance spelling and writing skills.

Drawing from this literature, it becomes clear that vocabulary, grammar, and spelling each highly contribute to the quality and development of writing productions. A strong grasp of vocabulary allows learners to convey meaning with greater precision and depth, while grammatical competence aids the production of coherent and syntactically accurate texts. Similarly, consistent spelling accuracy boosts the readability and credibility of written communication. These components are not separate from writing but rather foundational to its effectiveness. Thus, improving learners' abilities in these three areas is essential for improving overall writing competence.

1. Statement of the Problem

In the process of enhancing their writing proficiency, EFL learners often encounter the daunting challenge of identifying a definitive starting point and endpoint. They require comprehensive guidance to gain awareness about the specific shortcomings in their writing. Viewing their writing as a cohesive whole can be challenging; instead, a detailed analysis of its individual components is necessary. Those components are: vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. They are found in any written text, no matter its type or genre, so the reason behind the selection of these three aspects in particular is justified by the fact that they constitute all

writing, and are needed before being able to secure coherence and cohesion, which are also among the main aspects of written text, but are not of interest to this study.

Still, there exists a hovering issue, third year EFL learners at Biskra University have been observed to exhibit a rather negative attitude towards the writing tasks laid before them. This attitude reflects the fact that they view writing as a challenging task they would rather avoid. As previously mentioned, writing is a highly complex skill that involves multiple aspects (vocabulary, grammar, spelling), all of which require careful attention before any improvements can be made. With this in mind, it becomes evident why EFL learners hold such a negative attitude; the frustration of not identifying the root of one's difficulties, coupled with ineffective efforts, often lead to disengagement from the task altogether.

Hence, with the intention of providing assistance to both third year EFL learners at Biskra University and its teachers in order to help them optimize the writing skill, this research work seeks to acknowledge the need to assess learners' vocabulary, grammar, and spelling individually. The researcher believes, not only does this ensure a clear identification of specific weaknesses, but it also allows for potential improvements in current curricula. Through pinpointing specific areas lacking needed practice and instruction, as well as identifying the most common struggle EFL learners share among the three aforementioned aspects of writing, this research aims to contribute to the enhancement of EFL learning programs in the writing skill domain.

Once insights are gained into which aspect—vocabulary, grammar, or spelling—poses the most common challenge for EFL learners; educators, curriculum developers, and learners can set their priorities accordingly. This awareness highlights areas of focus while shedding light on deficiencies within the educational system. Therefore, the researcher believes that directly

addressing the most challenging aspect allows for effective action and resolution, finally fulfilling its long-standing need.

2. Aims of the Study

The general aim of this study is to highlight the one aspect of writing—vocabulary, grammar, or spelling—that presents the greatest challenge for learners.

More specifically, this research work also aims to:

- enhance both students' and teachers' understanding of specific areas requiring targeted improvement;
- raise awareness of the foundational role that writing skills play in academic development and success.
- encourage further research in this area to refine and advance pedagogical approaches to teaching writing; and

3. The Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What forms the biggest challenge for EFL students while writing (vocabulary, grammar, or spelling)?

RQ2: How do teachers perceive the relative importance of vocabulary, grammar, and spelling in writing instruction?

RQ3: What do teachers believe students lack most among vocabulary, grammar, and spelling?

4. The Research Hypotheses

Based on the abovementioned research questions, we propose the following research hypotheses:

RH1: It is hypothesized that Vocabulary is the most common area of difficulty for EFL third year students in writing tasks.

RH2: It is hypothesized that Grammar is the most common area of difficulty for EFL third year students in writing tasks.

RH3: It is hypothesized that Spelling is the most common area of difficulty for EFL third year students in writing tasks.

5. The Research Methodology for this Study

This study is grounded in the pragmatic research paradigm, which corresponds with its Mixed-methods approach. Pragmatism is a philosophical stance that prioritizes practical solutions over rigid methodological constraints, hence, it is particularly suitable for educational research that aims take into account real-world challenges. This approach is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality because individuals are “free” to choose the methods, techniques, and procedures of research that best meet their needs and purposes (Creswell, 2013). Unlike purely positivist paradigms, which emphasize objective measurement, or interpretivist paradigms, which focus on subjective meaning, pragmatism integrates both perspectives, which leaves room for methodological flexibility and comprehensive analysis.

The rationale for adopting this paradigm arises from the study's objective, which is to identify the single most common aspect during writing among vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. This a data-driven investigation (quantitative) alongside a descriptive, perception-based inquiry (qualitative). Pragmatism assists this dual approach because it makes certain

that numerical data from learner assessments are complemented by qualitative perspectives from teacher perceptions. With this said, the study is able to achieve a holistic understanding of writing difficulties, which can subsequently inform pedagogical strategies.

Given the nature of this investigation, a Mixed-methods Approach is employed. Mixed-methods research is advantageous in language education studies because it provides a richer, more detailed understanding of complex issues (Dörnyei, 2007). This approach incorporates both quantitative measurement of learner proficiency and qualitative interpretation of teacher perspectives, which facilitates a thorough exploration of the specific writing challenge that EFL learners face.

To explain further, the quantitative component consists of adopted tests that measure learners' proficiency in vocabulary, grammar, and spelling, while the qualitative component consists of a teachers' questionnaire that explores their observations and first-hand experiences handling learners' written productions, as well as their personal perspectives about how the teaching of writing is currently being handled. The use of mixed methods is thought to strengthen the validity of the study by enabling triangulation, which guarantees that findings are supported by multiple sources of evidence.

This study employs an Embedded Case Study Design, which is a subtype of mixed-methods research. This design is particularly useful for examining a specific phenomenon within a real-world context while integrating both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In this case, the phenomenon under study is the writing challenges faced by third-year EFL learners. An Embedded Case Study makes the simultaneous collection and analysis of different types of data possible within a clearly defined context, which ensures a comprehensive understanding of the issue. Case studies focus on an in-depth exploration of a limited, specific context, and in this research, the 'case' is defined by a

particular group of learners and their writing difficulties in vocabulary, grammar, and spelling.

The rationale for choosing an Embedded Case Study lies in its ability to provide a comprehensive and contextualized understanding of learners' difficulties in vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. This is made possible through embedding qualitative counterparts (teachers' perspectives) together with quantitative data (learners' proficiency test results), which successfully captures both the measurable dimensions of learner performance and the deeper instructional and contextual factors influencing their writing proficiency.

For the data collection methods, a combination of tests for learners and a semi-structured questionnaire addressed to teachers are thought to be most fitting:

- **Vocabulary:** Assessed using a multiple-choice questions (MCQs) test.
- **Grammar:** Assessed using a multiple-choice questions (MCQs) test.
- **Spelling:** Assessed via dictation, where learners are asked to write a number of commonly-misspelled words dictated on them.

In addition to the quantitative learner tests, qualitative data were gathered from six teachers through a semi-structured questionnaire. Teachers were asked questions about their observations on learner writing challenges, what they believe the area lacking most is, and their approaches for improving the teaching of the writing skill, among other insightful questions.

Considering the simplicity of the quantitative data in this research, its analysis was done through tabulation, which involved calculating the mean score (Average) for each writing aspect (Vocabulary, Grammar, and Spelling) out of an average of 40 points, with each correct response earning one point. Evidently, the aspect with the lowest mean score was identified as the most common challenge. This analytical approach makes a straightforward comparison

possible and highlights the primary area of difficulty among the learners using descriptive statistics that were achieved using Excel.

Qualitative responses from teacher questionnaires were analyzed through thematic analysis, and were done manually due to the small number of responses, hence did not call the need to use coding software such as MAXQDA. Such analysis aims to identify recurrent themes related to learners' writing struggles, in turn adding further perspective and context to the quantitative findings and taking account of their perceptions of the issue at hand.

6. Population, Sample, Sampling Technique

The target population for this study is EFL learners at Biskra University, specifically a sample comprising 30 third year EFL learners at Biskra University. Given the study's small scale, a non-random convenience sampling method was utilized. A third-year group under the instruction of the researcher's supervisor was selected to facilitate access to participants. This approach ensured efficient coordination and data collection within a controlled classroom environment, which provided intel about the writing challenges faced by this specific cohort of third year EFL learners.

7. Significance of the Study

The overarching significance of this study is identifying the predominant struggle among the three writing aspects, which strives to provide needed insights into the particular needs of learners. Doing so prompts for a tailored instruction that directly addresses areas needing further improvement. It is well established that a solid foundation in the writing skill is crucial for learners' academic success, especially as they advance to more complex tasks in Master's programs where proficiency in written communication is essential.

Accordingly, this research aims to encourage further academic contribution into this matter in order to emphasize the importance of the writing skill, as well as improve the way it

is approached by teachers and learners alike. Furthermore, this study aims to contribute towards a more nuanced understanding of writing difficulties in EFL contexts by accounting for individual and distinct components of writing; it will thus give teachers the opportunity to better target instruction in those specific areas most critical to learners' improvement.

The findings of this study, therefore, would hopefully provide assistance for educators and curriculum developers in creating focused interventions that reinforce EFL learners' writing competencies, and, overtime, make smoother academic progression and improved educational outcomes more attainable.

8. The Referencing Style for this Dissertation

This dissertation follows the American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition referencing style, which is widely taken as the most suitable format for educational research. The selection of this style was intentional and based on its relevance to the field.

9. Delimitations of the Study

For this research to progress effectively, it is essential to establish clear boundaries for its scope. Therefore:

- The present research specifically targets third year (L3) EFL learners at Biskra University. The reason for choosing this population is to have a focused study with a manageable number of participants within the time allocated. This choice makes it manageable to gather insights specific to this group, while larger samples could be problematic given time constraints, as well as unachievable due to the difficulty of finding more participants willing to undergo the tests.
- The three main aspects of writing—vocabulary, grammar, and spelling—are commonly identified as being fundamental but problematic for EFL learners. Other aspects of writing, such as content organization, stylistic choices, and various contexts

of writing, are deliberately excluded in correspondence with the aim of this study, which is simply to point out the aspect of writing most difficult for learners in general terms.

- Furthermore, the study adopts tests, which were evidently pre-validated, rather than develops more sophisticated linguistic methods or tools, with the aim to gain a general understanding of these particular writing aspects. The results of this approach are expected to provide a platform for future studies that may use more complex, context-sensitive analyses. Furthermore, due to time constraints, it is impossible to develop tests that account for all three aspects in a timely manner.
- In this study, no specific type of writing is addressed. Vocabulary, grammar, and spelling are considered integral components of any written communication and universally present across all forms of writing. They function as the core structural elements of all meaningful texts, so higher-order aspects of writing, such as coherence, cohesion, organization, argumentation, and stylistic refinement, are dependent upon the proper development of these foundational elements.

For example, coherence and cohesion ensure logical flow between ideas, organization structures content effectively, argumentation supports critical reasoning, and stylistic refinement enhances clarity and engagement. Nevertheless, these aspects necessitate proficiency in vocabulary, grammar, and spelling first. For this reason, this study is limited to analyzing the challenges learners face in these three areas because they are prerequisite skills for effective written expression, and without them, one cannot engage in any type of writing.

10. Structure of the Dissertation

The following is the intended structure for this research work:

Chapter One provides an overview of the writing skill in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and highlights its importance for academic success and overall language proficiency. It discusses the complexities involved in writing with emphasis on the challenges that EFL teachers and learners face. Overall, the chapter serves to establish the foundational understanding of the writing skill, its challenges, and strategies and approaches to teaching it.

Chapter Two examines the teaching and learning of vocabulary, grammar, and spelling in EFL contexts. It focuses on the critical role these components play in developing effective writing skills. The chapter also discusses the common challenges faced by both teachers and learners in teaching and learning these areas, which offers a deeper understanding of the obstacles that hinder EFL learners' writing proficiency.

Chapter Three outlines the research methodology employed in this study and details the mixed-methods approach used to collect and analyze data. It describes the process of selecting participants, the tools used for data collection, and the methods of data analysis. This section clarifies how the methodology aligns with the research aims and provides a meticulous explanation of the research design.

Chapter Four presents the findings from the fieldwork, and an in-depth analysis of the data collected from learners and teachers are provided, evidently, with a focus on the specific writing challenges related to vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. The chapter also discusses the interpretation of the data, which serves to point out key trends and patterns that emerged from the analysis and their implications for EFL writing instruction.

Chapter One: The Writing Skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Contexts

Introduction

1.1 Definition of the Writing Skill

1.2 Types of Writing

1.3 Purpose and Use of Writing

1.3.1 Purpose

1.3.2 Use

1.4 Challenges Faced in Writing

1.4.1 Challenges Faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learners

1.4.2 Challenges Faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers

1.5 Writing Teaching Approaches

Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the writing skill as a central component of English as a Foreign Language (henceforth, EFL) learning, with an emphasis on its significance in both academic and real-life communication. It begins by outlining key definitions of writing, viewing it as both a cognitive activity involving thought organization and a communicative tool for conveying meaning to distant audiences. The chapter then examines the different types of writing and the distinct purposes and uses it serves across educational and social contexts. Following this, it discusses the common challenges faced by learners as well as the instructional barriers that teachers often encounter. Finally, it introduces the major pedagogical approaches that inform writing instruction by showcasing how different models prioritize accuracy, process, or collaboration. These components collectively set the stage for the current study's investigation into which linguistic features most obstruct learner writing and how these challenges are managed within classroom practice.

1.1 The Writing Skill: Definitions

Writing constitutes a highly important language skill that plays a vital role in communication and the dissemination of knowledge. It is also an immensely difficult skill to acquire, and demands precision and clarity to ensure the reader understands the intended message. Byrne (1988) emphasizes that writing is “neither an easy nor a spontaneous activity” (p. 2). In the same matter, as Richard (1990) articulates:

Learning to write in either a first or second language is one of the most difficult tasks a learner encounters and one that few people can be said to fully master. Many native speakers leave school with a poor command of writing. (p. 100).

Wingersky et al., (2009) also provide their take on writing, articulating that “Writing is a way to gain control over your ideas and get them down on paper” (p. 2). According to this definition, it becomes evident that writing is not an innate talent, but rather a skill that can be cultivated and improved upon through effort and practice. They expand on this by showing that writing requires inward reflection that gives writers the ability to recall past experiences and translate them into text. This process of “replaying” memories in the mind grants individuals the ability to craft logical and cohesive narratives and articulate their thoughts coherently.

On another note, Byrne (1988) believes that writing is “the encoding of a message of some kind: that is, we translate our thoughts into language” (p. 1). Since writing lacks the immediacy of spoken communication, it necessitates careful consideration of word choice and sequencing of ideas. This compels writer to ensure that the message is explicit, well stated, and comprehensible to an absent reader.

According to the above-mentioned literature, writing can be understood as a complex, essential skill that involves intentionally organizing thoughts into coherent language to communicate meaning clearly to a distant reader. It is not an inborn talent, but rather a learned process that requires practice, reflection, and deliberate effort to develop.

1.2 Types of Writing

As it is generally accepted, writing serves different purposes depending on the context, audience, and objectives of communication. There exist multiple classifications or writing types, with each scholar providing several distinct types, and each type having its own unique characteristics and applications. For instance, Gautam (2020) points that writing can be categorized into six primary types: descriptive, narrative, expository, argumentative,

reflective, and persuasive writing, each of which plays an essential function in academic and professional discourse.

- ***Descriptive Writing***

This type of writing is used for creating a vivid depiction of people, places, objects, events, or experiences. It utilizes sensory language and details to create a clear and dynamic picture that strives to keep the reader engaged. In defining this type, Smalzer (2014, as cited in Gautam, 2020) states that descriptive writing relies heavily on precise vocabulary and figurative language to enhance the reader's perception. It is broadly adopted in literature, travel writing, and character sketches.

- ***Narrative Writing***

Having the capacity to be either fictional or based on real life, narrative writing is often presented in a structured sequence of events, and highly used in storytelling. Smalzer (2014, as cited in Gautam, 2020) emphasizes that narrative writing requires coherence, chronological organization, and a compelling plot to ensure that readers remain intrigued and minimize the possibility of confusing them. It is widely used in autobiographies, short stories, and personal essays.

- ***Expository writing***

Expository writing seeks to inform, explain, or clarify a particular subject matter. It presents factual information in a logical and structured manner, and eliminates any usage of figurative language for maximum clarity. Tickoo (2007, as cited in Gautam, 2020) describes expository writing as essential for academic and professional settings, where clarity and objectivity are a considerable requirement. Expository writing could be found in textbooks, reports, and instructional manuals.

- ***Argumentative Writing***

Such writing type is centered around presenting and defending a particular claim or viewpoint using logical reasoning and evidence to back them up. In defining this type, Tickoo (2007, as cited in Gautam, 2020) asserts that this form of writing is structured to a large extent, as it incorporates counterarguments and supporting evidence to persuade readers and present them with a new perspective. It is predominantly used in academic essays, legal documents, and opinion pieces.

- ***Reflective Writing***

This type is personal and introspective in the sense that individuals write to analyze their thoughts, experiences, or past events. Tickoo (2007, as cited in Gautam, 2020) explains that it encourages self-exploration and critical thinking and empowers its users to embrace certain aspects about themselves they would otherwise avoid, which makes it valuable in journals, personal statements, and self-evaluation essays.

- ***Persuasive Writing***

Persuasive writing aspires to influence, or alter altogether, the reader's beliefs or actions through rhetorical appeals and emotional engagement. In this matter, Tickoo (2007, as cited in Gautam, 2020) states that this type typically occurs in political speeches, advertisements, and opinion articles. It relies on strong arguments, emotional appeals, and credibility to convince an audience and affect their belief system.

1.3 Purpose and Use of Writing

Even if seemingly similar in name and surface meaning, the Purpose and Use of writing represent distinct, albeit nuanced, concepts within academic discourse. According to Miller (2005), Purpose pertains to the internal motivation or intent that drives a writer to compose a

text, and what the writer hopes to accomplish cognitively, emotionally, or rhetorically. Miller frames Purpose as synonymous with Motive, suggesting that writing is most often shaped by layered intentions such as informing, persuading, evaluating, or reflecting. These Motives reflect the writer's deeper reasoning and desired impact on the audience.

Use, on the other hand, is more outward-facing and functional; it refers to the practical applications of writing in social and educational contexts. As identified by Browne (2007), these include Uses such as instructing, entertaining, recording, or requesting, each tied to specific real-world communicative situations. In essence, while Purpose reflects the why of writing from the writer's perspective, Use addresses the how and where writing operates as a tool in interaction. Together, they illustrate writing's dual function as both a personal expression of intent and a socially situated practice.

1.3.1 Purpose

A writer's purpose, according to Miller (2005), is "essentially the same as a writer's motive; both terms are used to describe what a writer hopes to accomplish." (p. 5). This author argues that possessing a well-defined sense of purpose has the capacity to enhance the likelihood of achieving one's intended objectives, as clarity regarding one's goals paves the way for more focused and effective efforts.

In this respect, Miller (2005) identifies a number of motives for writing; however, makes it clear that "writing often reveals an interplay among various motives." (p. 6). In other words, it is important to recognize that writing frequently reflects an interaction of more than a single motive. For example, while the primary objective of an argument may be to persuade readers to adopt a particular viewpoint or take specific action, it may incorporate sections aimed at informing, entertaining, or inspiring the audience. That is to say, these secondary

motives aid the primary to achieve its objective seamlessly and effectively. As such, Miller (2005) outlines ten distinct motives of writing which are listed below:

- ***Writing to Understand Experience***

This motive involves more than the mere recording of personal events, as Miller (2005) states, “Writing to understand experience thus achieves at least two goals: Writers come to a better understanding of themselves, and readers come to understand experience different from their own.” (p.47). Writers, thus, reflect on their experiences to explore their magnitude, which encourages self-awareness enhancement and provides readers with insights into different life experiences. It also aims to encourage introspection about both past and present events for a more thorough comprehension of personal identity and emotions.

- ***Writing to Report Information***

Effective knowledge communication relies on the meticulous handling of data, with the collection, organization, and presentation of information serving as its foundational steps. Through it, writers transform raw data into meaningful information by providing context and addressing specific rhetorical situations. Reporting information requires distinguishing facts, which are “independently verifiable events, statistics, and statements.”, inferences, which are “reasonable suppositions drawn from facts”, and opinions, which are defined as “beliefs that may or may not be accurate but that nevertheless exist and must therefore be taken into account by those who report information.” in order to ensure clarity and accuracy in conveying knowledge (Miller, 2005, p. 97).

- ***Writing to Explain Information***

Proper explanation goes beyond reporting; it uncovers the underlying meaning, causes, and consequences of information. As such, when they explain, writers employ

analytical strategies such as classification, definition, and cause-effect relationships to enhance understanding. The aim is not only to increase the readers' knowledge of a subject, but also to shift their perspective, which develops their capacity to comprehend complex concepts more clearly (Miller, 2005, p. 174).

- ***Writing to Evaluate Something***

Evaluation involves critical thinking to assess the quality, value, or significance of subjects. Writers form judgments based on criteria related to importance, benefits, or worth, and they use these judgments to persuade readers into accepting their evaluation of subjects. However, Miller (2005) emphasizes two crucial elements that must be considered when establishing an evaluation. The first of which is the need for writers to be knowledgeable enough about the subject in question, since "The more your readers think you know about your subject, the more likely they are to follow your advice." He follows this by adding that no matter how knowledgeable of a subject one might be, they must remain humble, as they do not want to sound like they have a "monopoly on good advice." (p. 242).

- ***Writing to Analyze Images***

Before delving into this purpose, first, the term "image" is ought to be defined by Miller (2005):

Images are visual representations of people, animals, objects, and concepts.

An image can be a painting, drawing, sculpture, map, logo, or photograph (in which there is no written text to accompany the image) or an advertisement, cartoon, or Web page (in which pictures are combined with text) (p. 303).

To Miller, the ability to analyze images largely determines one's capacity to recognize why something is prosperous and another is not. It also enables criticality, through

which recipients are able to understand images and their “design and purpose, analyzing images as texts that can be “read” and interpreted.” (Miller, 2005, p. 303). An image could also be a combination of multiple visual representations, and if it is, all of which must be considered. Such image analysis helps writers interpret visual content by examining composition, purpose, and cultural significance. Hence, this motive presses on the active role of the viewer in decoding visual messages, whether in advertisements, photographs, or artworks, to uncover deeper meanings and societal implications.

- ***Writing to Analyze Texts***

Words do not exist in a vacuum. It is for that reason a body of text keeps on generating numerous interpretations, regardless of how meticulously-written it might be. To analyze a text means to closely examine written works in order to interpret meanings beyond the literal level. This necessitates writers to engage with texts critically, considering context, language, and structure to develop unique interpretations. This motive acknowledges that texts come alive through reader interaction, resulting in diverse analytical perspectives (Miller, 2005, p. 381).

- ***Writing to Persuade Others***

Persuasive writing aims to influence beliefs, attitudes, or actions. It achieves these objectives through some rhetorical strategies, including ethos (credibility), logos (logic), and pathos (emotional appeal). The goal is to present arguments that are compelling both intellectually and emotionally in order to alter opinions, though this only stands valid when different opinions are present. Thus, persuasion is “unnecessary when there is already consensus, and it is inappropriate when questions allow for only one correct answer.” (Miller, 2005, p. 451).

- ***Writing to Inspire Others***

Guided by the desire to inspire an audience, this motive strives to uplift the human spirit and reinforce values to elicit favorable emotions. It is important to note that inspirational writing differs from persuasive writing in the sense that the former seeks to strengthen existing beliefs, instill a hopeful outlook, and motivate readers. On the other hand, the latter focuses on influencing individuals and altering their opinions (Miller, 2005, p. 521).

- ***Writing to Amuse Others***

Similar to the previous two purposes, amusing writing requires a focus on readers rather than oneself. It is designed to entertain and bring pleasure to the audience through humor, wit, or light-hearted commentary. It requires an understanding of the audience's sensibilities and often uses tension, surprise, or irony to evoke laughter or amusement in a meaningful, empathetic manner. Such motive, however, should not be overdosed, as there exists a fine line between humor and ridicule; the latter being "not genuinely amusing, and it lends itself easily to abuse." (Miller, 2005, p. 570). In this matter, Miller clarifies that to amuse is to laugh *with* rather than *at* people.

- ***Writing to Experiment with Form***

In this motive, Miller (2005) argues that poetry, fiction, and drama are not the only genres of writing characterized by creativity, and instead, believes that any writing involves creativity. In this matter, he articulates the following:

Anything written and revised by human beings is creative to some extent, since an individual intelligence— working alone or in collaboration with others—has made choices about what ideas to include, how to express them, and how to arrange them (p. 609).

Therefore, experimental writing encourages creative exploration of literary structures and styles. Writers test the boundaries of traditional forms by blending genres or inventing new formats to express ideas innovatively. This experimentation reflects the writer's desire to find fresh and authentic ways to communicate, which prioritizes both form and substance.

1.3.2 Use

Writing is a fundamental mode of communication that serves various purposes within educational and social contexts. It enables individuals to convey messages, record information, and express personal thoughts in ways that extend beyond spoken language. Browne (2007) identifies eight key uses of writing, which highlight its diverse functions in facilitating learning, interaction, and personal expression (pp. 81-82). These uses are as follows:

- **Entertain:** Often through stories, poems, and other creative texts, writing serves to engage and amuse an audience
- **Persuade:** This function is utilized when the intention is to influence the reader's thoughts, opinions, beliefs and/or actions. It is commonly found in advertisements and opinion pieces.
- **Express Feelings:** The articulation of personal emotions, evident in diaries, letters, and expressive literary forms is made possible through writing.
- **Inform:** It serves as a means to convey factual information with clarity and precision, such as reports, articles, and instructional materials.
- **Request:** Writing can be used to make requests or solicit information, typically in formal and informal communications.
- **Instruct:** This involves providing directions or guidelines and ensuring that tasks are performed systematically, as seen in manuals, recipes, and procedural documents.

- **Record:** Writing acts as a tool for documentation, which preserves information for future reference. It comes in formats like journals, logs, and official records.
- **Express Opinions and Ideas:** Beyond factual reporting, writing enables individuals to share thoughts and viewpoints and allows subjectivity.

1.4 Challenges Faced in Writing

Writing is widely acknowledged as a challenging skill for second language (L2) learners, for it requires mastery of multiple linguistic and cognitive processes. Unlike speaking, which allows for immediate clarification, writing demands a lot more rigor and precision, as well as proper grammatical structures, vocabulary choices, and coherent organization. In this matter, Hyland (2003) states:

Students themselves commonly identify language difficulties, particularly an inadequate grasp of vocabulary or grammar, as their main problems with writing and frequently express their frustrations at being unable to convey their ideas in appropriate and correct English. (p. 34).

Challenges related to writing are not exclusive to EFL learners; EFL teachers also face significant difficulties. Since writing itself is a complex skill to acquire, the task of teaching it effectively presents an even greater challenge. Hyland (2003) notes that L2 writing teachers must consider both linguistic and social factors, as “varied cultural and linguistics backgrounds of students might influence the ways they learn to write and to accommodate these in their teaching.” (p. 44).

Furthermore, he points to another challenge teachers encounter, namely when scaffolding writing tasks. They are required to balance linguistic support with rhetorical guidance while helping learners become independent writers. He emphasizes the importance

of ensuring that grammar instruction is not treated as an isolated skill but rather as a tool for constructing meaning in writing.

As such, addressing both learner difficulties and teacher-related instructional barriers is crucial for improving EFL writing instruction. This division paves the way for a more comprehensive analysis of the factors hindering writing development and the pedagogical strategies needed to enhance writing proficiency.

1.4.1 Challenges Faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learners

Although researchers took different approaches, they shared the same aim of finding out challenges EFL students face when they write. Owing to this, Melouk and Zouaoui (2014) explore the challenges EFL university students face in academic writing, particularly at Djillali Liabes University in Algeria. Their study effectively identifies multiple writing deficiencies, including poor grammar, limited vocabulary, weak sentence structure, lack of coherence, and inadequate organization. This was achieved through the analysis of writing samples, test results, and observational field notes from second-year university students. They also argued that a large number of students enter university with insufficient academic writing experience, due to the prioritization of grammar exercises and reading comprehension over actual writing practice during pre-university education, which may explain the findings of the study. First language interference was also found to cause issues, namely with transitional expressions, idea development, and writing fluency.

To address these challenges, they suggest integrating reading and writing activities, providing model texts, allotting more time for writing instruction, and conducting writing conferences for individualized feedback. Although it provides useful pedagogical insights, this study lacks empirical data on the effectiveness of the suggested interventions and focuses

primarily on student deficiencies rather than institutional or curriculum-based factors that may contribute to these challenges.

In a similar vein, Tang (2012) explores the challenges faced by academic writers from ESL/EFL backgrounds when writing in English, namely in the context of higher education and scholarly publication. They employ a qualitative research approach in order to draw on insights from multiple contributors who examine the linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural difficulties encountered by non-native English-speaking students and scholars. The findings reveal that ESL/EFL academic writers struggle with genre expectations, coherence, argumentation, vocabulary, and grammatical accuracy, which are commonly attributed to differences between their first language discourse styles and Anglo-American academic conventions.

Additionally, more challenges could potentially emerge because of institutional pressures to publish in high-impact English journals. Alongside this, the study suggests pedagogical solutions such as mentoring programs, explicit instruction in academic discourse, and increased tolerance for linguistic diversity in scholarly publishing. The power dynamic of English as the dominant academic language is effectively highlighted in the study; however, it does not provide empirical data on how proposed interventions impact writing performance. Moreover, without the support of quantifiable evidence, the impact of the suggested solutions remains speculative.

On top of this, Ahmed (2019) investigates the challenges that third year EFL students at Soran University face in essay writing skills. With the use of a mixed-methods approach, the study collected data through student questionnaires and an analysis of 32 student essays. His research aimed to identify common writing difficulties and assess the most frequent errors in student essays. The investigation affirms that students struggle primarily with

grammar, organization of ideas, punctuation, and vocabulary. Notably, the most frequently occurring writing errors include incorrect use of grammar, first language interference, limited vocabulary, punctuation mistakes, and word order issues. Coupled with this, the quantitative analysis of student essays revealed that grammatical errors, particularly in tenses, subject-verb agreement, and sentence structure, were the most prevalent, followed by punctuation errors. Vocabulary-related issues were also significant obstacles to effective essay writing, coming immediately after punctuation errors.

Based on this, suggests that these difficulties stem from a lack of practice, ineffective instructional methods, and inadequate understanding of academic writing conventions. To counter these issues, Ahmed suggests that teachers should increase the number of writing sessions and implement targeted interventions to address students' grammar, vocabulary, and organizational skills.

Further insights into the challenges of EFL writing are provided in an edited volume by Ahmed and Abouabdelkader (2016). This book compiles multiple research studies conducted in different Arab countries, each exploring specific difficulties faced by students and instructors in developing writing proficiency. The following studies underline key findings from this volume.

Hammad (2016) aimed to identify the specific writing difficulties faced by Palestinian university students, and understand their underlying causes. The study found that students struggled with cohesion, word-for-word translation, and academic style. These difficulties arise from the structural differences between Arabic and English, which leads students to rely on direct translation. Similarly, Knouzi (2016) investigated the linguistic and discursive characteristics of Tunisian advanced EFL learners' essays. The study revealed widespread grammatical errors, a tendency to incorporate spoken language features into academic

writing, and a lack of fluency-accuracy balance. It can be inferred from the findings that even at advanced levels, students require explicit instruction in academic discourse conventions.

Moreover, a quasi-experimental study in the UAE by Solloway (2016) sought to examine the impact of Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) on Arabic L1 students' academic writing. The findings indicated that high-achieving students benefited significantly from WCF, which serves to demonstrate improved grammatical accuracy, whereas lower-achieving students showed minimal progress. This underscores the necessity of differentiated feedback approaches that account for students' diverse proficiency levels. In a separate study, Sperrazza and Raddawi (2016) aimed to explore the role of critical thinking in EFL academic writing instruction. Their intervention encouraged students to engage with social, cultural, and political issues in their essays, resulting in a noticeable improvement in students' analytical and argumentative skills. That is to say, the results of this study demonstrate the necessity of integrating critical thinking into EFL writing instruction.

Other studies in the volume shed light on instructional strategies and systemic challenges in EFL writing education. Al Zadjali (2016) aimed to investigate the effectiveness of shared writing activities in developing Omani young learners' writing skills. The study concluded that collaborative approaches enhance fluency, spelling, and overall writing confidence among students. In contrast, Muthanna (2016) reviewed the current state of writing instruction at Yemeni universities, with priority given to student and faculty perspectives.

The findings revealed widespread dissatisfaction with the current instruction due to ineffective curricula, outdated materials, and inadequate assessment practices. Accordingly, the study calls for comprehensive curriculum reform to align writing instruction with students' developmental needs. While these studies do not explicitly analyze writing errors

(e.g., grammar, cohesion, vocabulary issues), they address broader factors that influence students' writing proficiency. In other terms, they view writing difficulties from a broader angle, with an orientation to instructional strategies and systemic issues related to EFL writing rather than the micro-level linguistic difficulties students face, which remains relevant to the issue at hand.

1.4.2 Challenges Faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers

Effective writing instruction in EFL classrooms depends on addressing the challenges that teachers face. To account for this, Adam et al., (2021) investigate the challenges faced by Indonesian high school teachers in teaching English writing skills at a Vocational High School (VHS) in Gorontalo, Indonesia. Their study aims to identify key difficulties teachers encounter in the writing classroom and how they attempt to overcome them. To achieve this, qualitative data were gathered through interviews and classroom observations with four English teachers. The thematic analysis of such data reveals four major challenges: teaching technique-related challenges, time constraints, linguistic difficulties, and student motivation issues.

Teachers reported difficulty adapting their instructional techniques to students' varying proficiency levels, often modifying lesson plans to meet classroom needs. Time limitations also hindered effective writing instruction, as students required more time to complete writing tasks than the allocated class periods allowed. Additionally, teachers faced obstacles in helping students overcome grammatical weaknesses, vocabulary deficiencies, and organizational difficulties. Lack of student motivation further complicated the teaching process, particularly in maintaining engagement after break periods. Although the conclusions reached by this study are insightful, its small sample size—limited to four teachers from a single vocational school—limits the generalizability of said findings.

Similarly, challenges junior high school teachers face in teaching English writing in an Indonesian EFL context were examined by Amalia et al., (2021). They collected data from three English teachers in Tasikmalaya, Indonesia, through semi-structured interviews, which were then analyzed thematically. Through this, seven key challenges that hinder effective writing instruction were revealed: students' poor grammatical competence, difficulty in generating ideas, limited vocabulary knowledge, lack of motivation, time constraints, restricted access to teaching resources, and inadequate classroom facilities. In order to address these difficulties, teachers implemented various strategies, including explicit vocabulary instruction, collaborative writing activities, and structured writing exercises. Despite applying these strategies, their impact was diminished by systemic limitations, particularly time constraints and resource limitations, which were pointed out by teachers as significant obstacles to developing writing competence.

Furthermore, Hidayati (2018) investigated the pedagogical challenges encountered by Indonesian EFL teachers in the domain of writing instruction while also exploring potential solutions to mitigate these obstacles. Employing a qualitative research methodology, the study gathers data through structured interviews with ten English teachers representing both junior and senior high schools across East Java, Indonesia. As revealed in the study, the obstacles impeding teachers' instructional practices stem from two overarching categories: internal and external factors.

Internal challenges are those directly associated with students' learning processes and linguistic proficiency. Among these, grammatical inaccuracy, limited vocabulary range, native language interference, low motivation, and poor reading habits are the most prevalent. Based on this, the study emphasizes that morphological, syntactic, and semantic transfer from Indonesian to English often leads to structural inconsistencies in students' writing. Additionally, insufficient exposure to reading materials and a lack of intrinsic motivation

contribute to the disengagement from writing tasks, further exacerbating these linguistic difficulties.

Conversely, external challenges emerged from broader educational and institutional constraints, including large class sizes, restricted access to instructional resources, and limited instructional time. In fact, teachers reported that overcrowded classrooms inhibit personalized feedback and individualized instruction, which, in effect, results in restricting students' opportunities for targeted writing support. Moreover, the scarcity of specialized teaching aids, such as audiovisual materials and writing-focused resources, presents a barrier to the impactful implementation of engaging and scaffolded pedagogical strategies. Time limitations further aggravate these restrictions, as the designated classroom hours were rather insufficient to accommodate the iterative nature of the writing process.

Likewise, Leki (2001) critically examined the material, educational, and ideological challenges that EFL writing teachers encounter, particularly in non-English-dominant contexts. The study underscores the growing global significance of English L2 writing in both academic and professional settings, as evidenced by the expansion of English writing programs and the increasing pressure on academics worldwide to publish in English. Even though significant efforts have been made to enhance writing instruction, teachers remain burdened by multiple constraints, which can be broadly categorized into practical and ideological challenges.

From one standpoint, practical challenges pertain to the day-to-day realities of teaching EFL writing, including large class sizes, time constraints, local curriculum demands, and limited teacher training in L2 writing pedagogy. Many teachers, particularly in post-colonial and resource-limited settings, struggle to provide individualized feedback because of excessive student numbers, making process-based writing instruction difficult to implement.

Furthermore, structural constraints within institutions, such as a lack of instructional materials, technological resources, and administrative support, impose an additional hindrance to the successful teaching of writing. A crucial concern is that many EFL instructors have insufficient formal training in writing pedagogy, given that teacher education programs historically prioritize speaking and reading skills over writing instruction.

From another standpoint, ideological challenges pose a more deep-rooted and systemic issue. Leki (2001) argues that the teaching of EFL writing is largely dictated by methodologies and resources originating from English-dominant nations, thereby reinforcing externally constructed pedagogical frameworks. Such external influence results in a misalignment between imported instructional approaches and the local sociolinguistic realities of EFL learners. Moreover, the globalization of English academic writing has led to the marginalization of local rhetorical traditions, as many educational institutions prioritize English proficiency over native-language literacy. Leki's study also points out the ethical dilemma of mandating EFL writing instruction in contexts where students may not perceive English writing as relevant to their academic or professional goals.

That being said, the study remains largely theoretical and does not present empirical data to substantiate its claims. Therefore, future research should adopt an empirical approach that incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to assess the impact of alternative instructional models on EFL writing proficiency.

1.5 Writing Teaching Approaches

Writing pedagogy in EFL contexts has been shaped by two major instructional paradigms: the product approach and the process approach. Each framework is rooted in distinct linguistic and educational principles, which ultimately influences how writing is taught and assessed. With the product-oriented approach being centered on achieving

structural accuracy and linguistic precision in the final text, the process approach adopts a recursive framework and places greater emphasis on multiple drafts, revision, and peer feedback. Within this context, Nunan (1999) remarks that the dichotomy between product- and process-based instruction remains a focal issue in discussions on writing pedagogy.

- ***Product-oriented Approach***

At one extreme, the product-oriented approach to writing instruction is based on the production of grammatically correct, coherent, and structured texts. It is highly task-based, meaning it requires learners to imitate, copy, and transform model texts provided by instructors or textbooks. According to Nunan (1999), this approach is closely linked to structuralist linguistics and bottom-up processing, wherein sentences are viewed as the fundamental building blocks of discourse, constructed in a linear sequence. This approach considers linguistic accuracy as the primary goal, with an emphasis on grammatical correctness and adherence to prescribed conventions.

Nevertheless, one of the principal deficiencies of the product approach is its neglect of the cognitive mechanisms and communicative functions essential to effective writing. It supposes that proficiency can be achieved mainly through the reproduction of linguistic forms, rather than through active engagement in the writing process. Criticism of this approach is centered around its failure to incorporate the complexities of discourse formation, given its limited attention to the broader communicative and contextual dynamics that influence meaning-making.

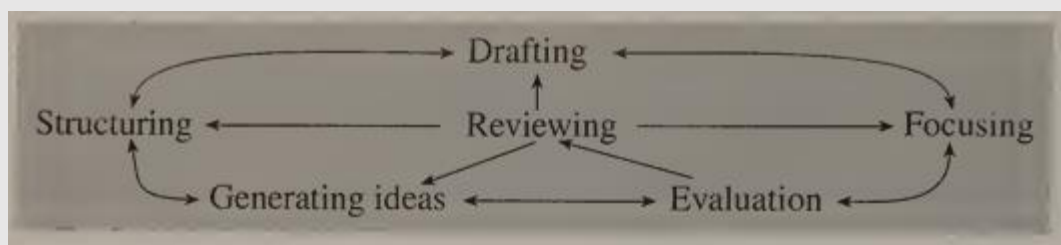
- ***Process-oriented approach***

At the other extreme, the process-oriented approach redirects the focus from the final written product to the progressive nature of writing development. It endorses that writing is a recursive process that involves multiple stages of drafting, feedback, and revision. In this

matter, Nunan (1999) states that the process-oriented approach allows for unrestricted text creation by initially reducing emphasis on grammatical precision, thereby enabling ongoing re-evaluation and structural refinement. Teachers guide students through brainstorming, outlining, drafting, and peer review activities to create a collaborative learning environment. White and Arndt (1991, as cited in Nunan, 1999, p. 274) outline the following six core procedures in the writing process:

- **Generating ideas:** brainstorming, making notes, and posing questions.
- **Structuring:** organizing information logically.
- **Drafting:** producing an initial version of the text.
- **Reviewing:** reflecting on content and structure.
- **Focusing:** refining the text by strengthening arguments and coherence.
- **Evaluation:** assessing the effectiveness of the text before finalizing.

Figure 1. *Procedures involved in producing a written text (Nunan, 1999, p. 274)*



Additionally, White and Arndt (1991, as cited in Nunan, 1999, p. 274) suggest a more detailed sequence of 13 classroom activities that further refine the writing process:

- **Discussion (class, small group, pair)**
- **Brainstorming/ making notes/ asking questions**
- **Fastwriting/ selecting ideas/ establishing a viewpoint**
- **Rough drafting**
- **Preliminary self-evaluation**

- **Arranging information/ structuring the text**
- **First draft**
- **Group/ peer evaluation and responding**
- **Conference**
- **Second draft**
- **Self-evaluation/ editing/ proofreading**
- **Finished draft**
- **Final responding to draft**

Rather than centering on grammatical precision, as seen in the product-oriented model, the process approach promotes fluency in the early stages of composition. As Nunan (1999) states, “proponents of process writing recognize and accept the reality that there will never be the perfect text, but that one can get closer to perfection through producing, reflecting on, discussing, and reworking successive drafts of a text” (p. 272).

Acknowledged for its contributions to writing instruction, the process approach has nevertheless been subject to critical examination. One of the main concerns is that students may struggle to transition from personal, exploratory writing to more formal academic genres. Martin (1985, as cited in Nunan, 1999) argues that factual writing fosters critical thinking skills, whereas process-based instruction may lead learners to overemphasize personal expression at the expense of structured argumentation.

While the product- and process-based approaches have been extensively discussed in writing pedagogy (Nunan, 1999), additional frameworks refine existing interpretations of how writing can be effectively taught in ESL/EFL contexts. Iskandar (2020) identifies content-based, reader-oriented, collaborative, technology-assisted, and social media-based approaches, each of which points out different instructional priorities. Enhancing writing

instruction requires the effective utilization of disciplinary knowledge, audience awareness, peer collaboration, digital tools, and online platforms.

- ***Content-Based Approach***

The content-based approach combines language learning with subject-matter instruction, and this, in turn, allows students to engage with contextually meaningful writing tasks (Shih, 1986, as cited in Iskandar, 2020). By virtue of de-emphasizing linguistic mechanics in favor of topic exploration, this model provides students with opportunities to enhance their writing proficiency through interactions with real-world subject matter. Within this framework, instructional approaches include team teaching, linked courses, and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) modules. Such strategies support in-depth learning through the integration of writing instruction within academic disciplines (Iskandar, 2020). Scholars maintain that students are more motivated to write when engaging with topics they are knowledgeable about (Johnston, 1985, as cited in Iskandar, 2020). In addition, content-based instruction corresponds with task-based learning principles and helps students attain linguistic competence thanks to meaningful interaction.

However, critics caution that overemphasizing content may lead to insufficient attention to linguistic accuracy and rhetorical structure, potentially disadvantaging students who struggle with formal writing conventions (Iskandar, 2020).

- ***Reader-Oriented Approach***

The reader-oriented approach, which includes English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP), favors the expectations of academic and professional readers over individual student expression (Iskandar, 2020). Horowitz (1986, as cited in Iskandar, 2020) asserts that this approach corrects a fundamental deficiency of fluency-based models by orienting writing instruction towards discipline-specific expectations, rather than

personal expression. From this perspective, writing is not simply a tool for self-expression but a means of socialization into academic and professional communities. At the university level, this model has exerted considerable influence by necessitating adherence to discipline-specific discourse norms (Silva, 1990, as cited in Iskandar, 2020). Moreover, it remains integral to genre-based writing instruction, and ensures that students develop texts that reflect established disciplinary conventions. Certain scholars, however, question the inflexible nature of genre-based instruction, asserting that it imposes constraints on students' creative development and their ability to write effectively across different contexts.

- ***Collaborative Writing Approach***

Encouraging co-authoring, peer feedback, and group discussions allows the collaborative writing approach to build an interactive learning environment. (Iskandar, 2020). This approach to writing has been shown to improve student engagement and linguistic awareness since it involves peer negotiation of meaning and continuous refinement of written work (Hillerbrand, 1994; Battersby, 1995, as cited in Iskandar, 2020). Furthermore, it helps learners develop writing as a social practice via prioritizing collaborative engagement over solitary composition.

Still, some researchers contend that it may not be equally beneficial for all learners, particularly those who favor individual work. This issue becomes more evident in diverse learning environments where students exhibit differing levels of proficiency and stylistic approaches to writing (Iskandar, 2020).

- ***Computer-Assisted Writing Approach (CALL)***

The computer-assisted language learning (CALL) approach has greatly altered writing instruction due to the incorporation of digital tools that facilitate drafting, editing, and feedback (Iskandar, 2020). Word processors, spell-checkers, and grammar-checking software

present immediate corrective feedback so that students can refine their writing with greater autonomy. To add, real-time peer review and teacher feedback become possible through online collaborative tools such as Google Docs, which enhances the efficiency of the revision process.

CALL-based writing instruction enhances process-oriented composition by granting students the flexibility to revise their drafts without the limitations imposed by traditional pen-and-paper writing (Iskandar, 2020). Nevertheless, critics warn that overreliance on digital correction tools may reduce learners' attention to grammar and structure, potentially weakening their ability to self-edit without technological assistance.

- ***Social Media-Based Writing Approach***

Utilizing digital platforms to enhance writing engagement, a more recent addition to writing pedagogy emerged; that being the social media-based approach. According to Iskandar (2020), blogs, discussion forums, and social networking sites expose learners to authentic audiences, thereby enabling them to engage in writing within real-world communicative contexts. Traditional classroom writing tends to be devoid of an immediate audience, whereas social media-based writing promotes interaction, feedback, and audience awareness.

A major strength of this approach is its ability to help students recognize writing as a valuable skill instead of a mandated academic obligation. (Iskandar, 2020). Such engagement may heighten motivation and improve fluency, as students are more likely to practice writing voluntarily. Nevertheless, the discrepancy between informal social media discourse and academic writing conventions has led some educators to caution that this misalignment may impede students' ability to transition effectively into formal composition.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has offered a discussion of major dimensions of writing in the context of EFL education, establishing it as a multifaceted and essential skill. It examined writing's core functions, purposes, and applications, and brought to attention both the learner- and teacher-related challenges that arise in instructional settings. In doing so, it has also outlined the various pedagogical approaches that influence how writing is taught and supported in classrooms. Altogether, the chapter provides an informed backdrop for subsequent inquiry through outlining essential dimensions of writing and the pedagogical factors that influence its development within EFL contexts.

Chapter Two: Vocabulary, Grammar, and Spelling in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Contexts

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Introduction

The present chapter tackles the three aspects of writing that are of interest to this study, namely vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. These three aspects are taken to be the base of effective communication and the development of the writing skill, yet they present various challenges for both learners and educators. The chapter explores the definitions, importance, teaching and learning difficulties, and instructional strategies of each aspect separately.

2.1 Vocabulary

Having a wide range of vocabulary is of absolute essence for producing clear and effective writing because it helps individuals express their ideas with precision, richness, and variety. When vocabulary is limited, written work would very likely lack clarity, feel repetitive, or fail to convey the intended message. On the other hand, possessing strong word knowledge makes more organized, engaging, and meaningful compositions more attainable. It also contributes to the overall flow of a text by supporting logical links between points. Therefore, vocabulary is a key factor in shaping skilled and confident writers.

2.1.1 Vocabulary: Definitions

Being the base of any communication act, vocabulary is one of the most crucial aspects of learning a foreign language. There exists an abundance of different vocabulary definitions, though all scholars still agree on its vitality. According to Linse (2005), vocabulary is the collection of words that an individual knows. In a similar vein, Hatch and Brown (1995) believe that “the term vocabulary refers to a list or set of words for a particular language or a list or set of words that individual speakers of a language might use.” (p. 1).

Hornby (2005, p. 1707) provides several definitions of vocabulary:

- All the words that a person knows or uses (e.g., to have a wide/limited vocabulary).

- All the words in a particular language.
- The words that people use when they are talking about a particular subject.
- A list of words with their meanings, especially in a book for learning a foreign language.

Houghton Mifflin Company (1995, p. 1112) also provides multiple definitions:

- All the words of a language.
- An alphabetical list of words often defined or translated.
- Specialized expressions indigenous to a particular field, subject, trade, or subculture.

All in all, vocabulary can be understood as the complete set of words that an individual knows, understands, and uses within a language. It encompasses both the general words of a language and those specific to certain topics, fields, or contexts. It may also refer to the words actively used in speech and writing, as well as those recognized passively through listening and reading. To add, it can be seen as both a personal repertoire and a structured collection of terms presented in language-learning materials. Altogether, vocabulary forms the core of linguistic competence that enables meaningful communication across a range of situations.

2.1.1.1 Types of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is recognized as being a multifaceted system that includes aspects such as form, meaning, and use. It comprises distinct categories that serve unique function in language use and processing (Nation, 2001, p. 36). Additionally, it necessitates an examination of its various types, which typically include: receptive and productive vocabulary, as well as general vocabulary and academic vocabulary. Lado (1971) presents an alternative classification and refers to receptive vocabulary as vocabulary for recognition, and productive vocabulary as vocabulary for production. Likewise, Nation's general vocabulary

corresponds with Lado's common core vocabulary, while academic vocabulary is comparable to specialized vocabularies.

- ***Receptive Vocabulary/ Vocabulary for Recognition***

According to Webb (2009, as cited in Elhamdi and Hezam, 2020), receptive vocabulary refers to words that learners can identify and comprehend in written or spoken contexts, such as reading or listening, yet they are not actively utilized in speech or writing. In much the same way, Nunan (2015, p. 111) states that receptive vocabulary consists of words that learners recognize and understand when encountered in context but do not actively use in speech or writing. Learners can comprehend these words while listening or reading, yet they may lack the ability to produce them independently in communication. Lado (1971) identifies this same concept as vocabulary for recognition, and describes it as being "much larger than our production vocabulary" (p. 80).

- ***Productive Vocabulary/ Vocabulary for Production***

Webb (2005, as cited in Elhamdi & Hezam, 2020) defines productive vocabulary as words that learners understand, pronounce correctly, and use meaningfully in both speaking and writing. It demands active retrieval and application in real-time communication. Under the same light, Nunan (2015) states that productive vocabulary "contains those words that a person can both recognize and use." (p. 111). This type of vocabulary involves correct pronunciation, appropriate usage, and grammatical accuracy, which grant learners the ability to express their thoughts effectively. Similarly, Lado (1971, p. 81) refers to this as vocabulary for production, which comprise words that facilitate effective communication in ordinary situations.

- ***Academic Vocabulary/ Specialized Vocabularies***

In the view of the work of the English Language Education Section, Curriculum Development Institute (2022, p. 2), academic vocabulary consists of words that are commonly used in formal academic contexts. This category includes terms prevalent in academic writing, lectures, scholarly publications, and instructional texts, all of which function as formal alternatives to colloquial language, which is generally discouraged in academic settings. Academic vocabulary is known to be more precise and less frequently used in everyday conversation. In addition, it comprises discipline-specific vocabulary that is indispensable for grasping core concepts within diverse areas of academic study. Likewise, Lado (1971) introduces this type under specialized vocabularies which are known only to special groups and “have to be learned by native as well as nonnative speakers.” (p. 80).

- ***General Vocabulary/ Common Core Vocabulary***

In contrast, general vocabulary refers to words that are widely used in everyday communication, including casual conversations, informal writing, and non-specialized texts (English Language Education Section, Curriculum Development Institute, 2022, p. 2). As opposed to academic vocabulary, general vocabulary commonly includes phrasal verbs, idiomatic expressions, and commonly spoken words, which may be avoided in formal academic discourse. Under the same light, Lado (1971, p. 80) labels this as common core vocabulary which all members of a language community share.

Beyond these four categories, Armbruster et al., (2001, p. 34) propose an alternative framework that introduces further distinctions in vocabulary types. Their classification sheds light on the role of vocabulary across different language modalities, which identifies listening, speaking, reading, and writing vocabulary as core components of linguistic growth.

- ***Listening vocabulary***

It refers to the words individuals need to understand spoken language.

- ***Speaking vocabulary***

It includes the words actively used in verbal communication.

- ***Reading vocabulary***

It consists of the words required to comprehend written text.

- ***Writing vocabulary***

It encompasses the words used in written expression.

2.1.1.2 Aspects of Vocabulary

Being a complex linguistic system, vocabulary involves multiple dimensions important for language use and comprehension. According to Lado (1971), vocabulary consists of three key aspects that hold a central position in linguistic processing and language acquisition.

- ***Form***

This aspect refers to the phonological, morphological, and orthographic characteristics of words. In different languages, words may vary in pronunciation, stress, tone, and spelling. Lado (1971, p. 76) explains that word forms are influenced by factors such as speech speed, sentence position, stress patterns, and, formality of the situation, which contribute to the variations in pronunciation and word structure.

- ***Meaning***

Meaning encompasses the semantic properties of words and how they are interpreted within various linguistic contexts. Lado (1971) establishes that word meanings are often fluid rather than fixed, as their interpretation depends on contextual usage. Culture, according to Lado (1971), is a primary determiner of meaning: “As a matter of fact the meanings into which we classify our experience are culturally determined or modified, and they vary considerably from culture to culture.” (p. 78).

- ***Distribution***

This aspect relates to how words are used within a language system, including their grammatical and contextual restrictions. Lado (1971, p. 79) emphasizes that words may be restricted in distribution based on syntax, dialectal variation, or formality levels, which can pose challenges for learners acquiring a foreign language. An example of a grammatical restriction is how the word “water” can function as: a noun in “a glass of water”, a verb in “water the garden”, and a noun adjunct in “water meter”, but not as an adjective without adjustment in form, e. g., “watery substance”.

2.1.2 Importance of Vocabulary in Relation to Writing

The foundational role vocabulary serves in written communication cannot be overstated. It defines a writer’s ability to construct cohesive, grammatically sound, and semantically rich texts. A well-developed vocabulary allows writers to articulate complex ideas with precision while being able identify and use appropriate tone and register, and ultimately, aids them in structuring their writing in a way that boosts readability and engagement. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, students are very likely to struggle with multiple issues such as word choice, sentence structure, coherence, and clarity, all of which could highly affect the overall quality of their writing.

Owing to this, a growing body of research underlines the direct link between vocabulary knowledge and writing performance. Karakoç and Köse (2017) examined the effects of vocabulary size on writing outcomes among English as a Foreign Language (henceforth, EFL) learners and found that students with a richer productive vocabulary scored significantly higher in writing assessments. Their investigation identified a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.431$) between productive vocabulary knowledge and writing proficiency, and this result shows that students with a stronger vocabulary base have a greater ability to construct syntactically and semantically complex texts. Furthermore, their analysis of Lexical Frequency Profiles indicated that students with higher productive vocabulary knowledge demonstrated greater lexical richness in their essays, which only reinforces the idea that a broad and deep vocabulary enables more precise and expressive writing.

Similarly, Dhuli et al., (2023) conducted a meta-analysis on the role of vocabulary knowledge in writing and concluded that students with an extensive vocabulary range produce more sophisticated written discourse. Their study pushed forward the belief that limited vocabulary is a primary barrier to effective writing because it restricts word choice, limits syntactic variety, and reduces the overall coherence and fluency of a text. They went even further by arguing that vocabulary contributes to lexical selection while also enabling the development of arguments, the elaboration of ideas, and the maintenance of logical flow throughout a written piece.

A major discussion in vocabulary research concerns the relative importance of receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge in written expression. Maskor and Baharudin (2016) assert that both types of vocabulary are essential for writing proficiency because they serve different but complementary functions. Receptive vocabulary knowledge, which refers to words that a learner recognizes and understands when reading or listening, allows writers to draw from a broad lexical pool and comprehend written input effectively. Nevertheless,

productive vocabulary knowledge, which, as previously established, involves words that a learner can actively retrieve and use correctly in writing or speech, is what ultimately determines writing quality. Their findings indicate that receptive vocabulary contributes to reading comprehension and idea formation, while productive vocabulary is a stronger predictor of writing proficiency for its ability to enable accurate word retrieval, grammatical structuring, and lexical precision.

Aside from vocabulary size, researchers have likewise analyzed the role of lexical richness in writing, that is, the variety, complexity, and sophistication of words used in a text. Tovar Viera (2017) examined the lexical profiles of EFL learners and found that students with higher lexical diversity produced more structured, fluent, and semantically precise essays. His study demonstrated a strong correlation between lexical richness and writing fluency, where students with a more diverse vocabulary write more effortlessly, maintain fluidity, and effectively minimize repetition and redundancy. Building upon this, the ability to use less frequent, more specialized words was found to be a marker of advanced writing skills because it enhances clarity, argumentation, and textual cohesion.

Another noteworthy area of research concerns the relationship between vocabulary depth, breadth, and writing performance. Varnaseri and Farvardin (2016) conducted a study among Iranian MA students and found that both vocabulary breadth (the number of words known) and depth (understanding of word meanings, collocations, and connotations) exert a considerable effect on writing skills. Their study reported a stronger correlation between vocabulary depth and writing performance ($r = 0.49$) than between vocabulary breadth and writing performance ($r = 0.45$). That is to say, even if knowing many words is considered beneficial, a deeper knowledge of word meanings, nuances, and appropriate usage is found to be more useful for producing high-quality writing.

Given the extensive evidence supporting the role of vocabulary in writing, Alqahtani (2015) argues that explicit vocabulary instruction should be integrated into language curricula to improve students' writing proficiency. He stresses that students with strong vocabulary knowledge are more successful in academic writing since they can articulate ideas with a varying complexity, incorporate syntactic variety, and use more precise and effective wording. Coupled with this, he maintains that vocabulary instruction should go beyond word memorization and additionally incorporate linguistic aspects like collocation training, synonym differentiation, and contextual application to enhance both vocabulary breadth and depth.

2.1.3 Vocabulary Teaching and Learning Difficulties

Teaching and learning vocabulary are a paramount yet often demanding aspect of language education. Regardless of such importance, the vast majority of learners face persistent obstacles in acquiring and using new words effectively. These difficulties may stem from the abstract nature of vocabulary, the vast number of items to be learned, or the challenge of retaining and recalling words in context. Similarly, teachers may struggle to select appropriate instructional methods, adapt to learners' diverse needs, and maintain long-term vocabulary retention. As a result, having a good grasp on the common challenges associated with vocabulary instruction and acquisition is essential for improving teaching practices and learning outcomes.

2.1.3.1 Teaching Difficulties

The effective teaching of vocabulary is usually accompanied with a number of pedagogical challenges, namely limited instructional time, inadequate training, difficulty in word selection, and ineffective teaching methods. These obstacles largely impede both

teachers' ability to provide effective and engaging vocabulary instruction and students' lexical development and overall language proficiency.

One of the most pressing challenges in vocabulary instruction is time constraints, for teachers are prone to difficulties in allocating sufficient time for vocabulary development within an already packed curriculum. Numerous educators feel pressured to prioritize grammar and reading comprehension over vocabulary instruction, which leaves very little room for structured vocabulary teaching (Sari & Wardani, 2019). The lack of dedicated time will inevitably lead to superficial learning, where students are exposed to new words but not given enough opportunities for reinforcement and practice, hence come out unable to utilize any of it.

Coupled with that, teachers' limited knowledge of effective vocabulary teaching methods further aggravates the challenge. A number of educators rely on translation as a fallback strategy when confronting setbacks in explaining word meanings in context, which may obstruct students' ability to internalize vocabulary meaningfully (Sari & Wardani, 2019). Moreover, some teachers fail to develop engaging interactive vocabulary learning techniques because of their reliance on traditional rote memorization and word lists, which have been shown to be ineffective for long-term retention (Elmahdi & Hezam, 2020).

To add, the scarcity of professional development opportunities leaves teachers without enough exposure to innovative methods, such as contextualized instruction, multimodal learning, and gamification techniques, which have the potential to substantially enhance vocabulary retention. Without adequate training, teachers are subject to facing difficulties when integrating active learning strategies that urge students to use vocabulary in meaningful contexts.

Selecting the appropriate vocabulary items to teach is another challenge, since teachers must balance high-frequency words, academic vocabulary, and discipline-specific terminology (Chacón-Beltrán et al., 2010). When faced with technical or abstract words, teachers most times find it difficult to explain their meanings in an accessible way, which leads to student confusion (Sari & Wardani, 2019).

The engagement of students in vocabulary learning forms another considerable concern, for many educators endure setbacks when attempting to create stimulating learning environments that nurture meaningful participation. Conventional instructional strategies that do not incorporate interactive elements very regularly contribute to learner disengagement and decreased motivation, thereby impeding the efficacy of vocabulary acquisition. (Elmahdi & Hezam, 2020). Likewise, instructors may not adequately cultivate students' self-assurance in utilizing newly-acquired vocabulary, which in turn constrains their language exploration and risk-taking during communication. Such could highly decrease their willingness to experiment with linguistic structures and communicate with greater spontaneity.

2.1.3.2 Learning Difficulties

One of the most prevalent challenges in vocabulary learning is the discrepancy between English spelling and pronunciation. Lutfiyah et al., (2022) found that students commonly encounter difficulties when trying to recognize how words are pronounced based on their written form, which brings about errors in both oral and written communication. Under the same light, Afzal (2019) pointed out that EFL learners at the university level experience obstacles in correctly pronouncing new vocabulary which leads to a negative impact on their ability to recall and use words accurately in conversation.

Understanding word meanings and their appropriate usage in different contexts stands as another major challenge. Learners regularly find it troublesome to grasp nuanced

meanings, especially when words have multiple definitions or connotations (Afzal, 2019). Similarly, Elhamdi and Hezam (2020) emphasized that vocabulary learning extends beyond mere memorization, explaining that it demands learners to understand the sociocultural dimensions of words, namely idiomatic expressions and collocations. With the absence of adequate exposure to authentic language use, students grapple with applying vocabulary accurately in discourse.

Vocabulary learning is a gradual process that calls for repeated exposure and reinforcement. However, learners regularly experience cognitive overload when attempting to memorize large volumes of new words without effective retention strategies. In the view of Lutfiyah et al., (2022), students utilize various strategies such as dictionary use, peer discussion, and multimedia resources to enhance retention, yet they continue to struggle with long-term recall. Afzal (2019) expanded that insufficient recycling of vocabulary items contributes to forgetting, and in turn, necessitates structured review practices in instructional settings. Complementarily, Elhamdi and Hezam (2020) found that learners are prone to forgetting new words soon after learning them, struggle with transferring vocabulary to long-term memory, and experience difficulties during assessments. On top of this, they also brought to light the fact that students get bored very fast if teachers teach them using old conventional methods and techniques.

Several external factors hinder vocabulary acquisition, which are underlined by Elhamdi and Hezam (2020). They reported that many students do not receive standardized English education due to the absence of well-trained teachers, financial constraints, lack of multimedia-assisted learning environments, and the absence of English language clubs. Besides, students rely on teachers to translate vocabulary into their first language (L1) quite often, as a result, their ability to develop independent language-learning strategies is reduced.

Over and above that, motivation is integral to vocabulary learning. Elhamdi and Hezam (2020) found that many students enter higher education with little to no foundational English knowledge despite years of instruction. This is because they place high expectations on their teachers and believe that they are competent enough to rapidly improve their language proficiency through their instruction. Another issue that hampers students' ability to learn vocabulary is the evident struggle they face when using communication strategies to compensate for their limited linguistic knowledge.

2.1.4 Strategies to Teach Vocabulary

Teaching vocabulary effectively dictates a combination of structured and flexible strategies that cater to diverse learning needs. Some of the very many of teaching strategies include Unplanned Vocabulary Teaching, Planned Vocabulary Teaching, and Vocabulary Presentation Teaching (Shamiyeva, 2018). Further, some innovative strategies include The Ripple Effect, Word Wall Approach, and Teaching Vocabulary with Color (Anuthama, 2010). Applying such methods supports educators in advancing learners' vocabulary acquisition and memory retention.

- ***Unplanned Vocabulary Teaching***

Unplanned Vocabulary Teaching takes place when teachers introduce vocabulary spontaneously in response to student needs or lesson progression. It involves three stages: conveying meaning, checking understanding, and consolidating knowledge (Shamiyeva, 2018). This strategy provides teachers with techniques such as miming, providing synonyms, giving anecdotes, or using opposites to explain unfamiliar words. It also ensures that vocabulary learning remains context-driven and relevant to students' immediate needs. It is characterized by flexibility since it immediately addresses students concerns, whatever they may be.

- ***Planned Vocabulary Teaching***

Planned Vocabulary Teaching, also known as intentional vocabulary instruction, involves pre-selecting vocabulary items for systematic teaching. This method provides learners with opportunities to come across and practice target vocabulary items multiple times across different contexts (Shamiyeva, 2018). Planned vocabulary instruction can occur amidst dedicated vocabulary lessons or as a follow-up to reading, listening, or discussion activities. Teachers have the ability to utilize dictionaries, definitions, or translation techniques to facilitate understanding.

- ***Vocabulary Presentation Teaching***

Vocabulary Presentation Teaching refers to the structured introduction of new words to learners using varied instructional techniques. This approach requires a careful and thorough consideration of learner proficiency, word complexity, and the purpose of vocabulary acquisition, whether for productive or receptive use (Shamiyeva, 2018). Hence, selecting the most suitable presentation grants the opportunity for teachers to optimize comprehension and retention, which helps ensure that learners can effectively integrate new words into their linguistic repertoire. This method incorporates three primary techniques: Translation, Visual Techniques, and Verbal Techniques (Shamiyeva, 2018).

- Translation provides a direct link between a new word and its equivalent in the learner's first language (L1). While translation is time-efficient and accessible for beginners, the overreliance on it has a high potential to hinder students' ability to develop independent vocabulary acquisition skills (Shamiyeva, 2018). Thus, teachers should balance translation with context-based strategies to lay the grounds for deeper word understanding.

- Visual Techniques is the use of images, gestures, and visual aids can enhance vocabulary retention via the creation of strong mental associations (Shamiyeva, 2018). Visual techniques aid learners in remembering words through imagery, which in turn makes them more resistant to forgetting. Despite this, teachers must verify that visual representations accurately convey word meanings to avoid misinterpretations.
- Verbal techniques involve explaining word meanings through using examples, synonyms, superordinate terms, and full definitions (Shamiyeva, 2018). This method is particularly impactful for learners with prior language knowledge because it makes it possible to connect new words with familiar concepts. Ultimately, it opts for introducing long-term retention using carefully structured verbal explanations.
- ***The Ripple Effect***

The Ripple Effect is a cognitive approach to vocabulary teaching that accentuates core word meanings and their metaphorical extensions (Anuthama, 2010). This method helps learners understand that many words have related meanings and allows them to recognize patterns in vocabulary expansion. Teachers can illustrate this approach with the application of diagrams that map core meanings to extended usages.

- ***The Word Wall Approach***

This approach involves displaying new vocabulary items on classroom walls with the aim of creating a reference tool that students can consult whenever the need arises (Anuthama, 2010). Word walls amplify vocabulary learning through repeated exposure and active engagement. Teachers can organize word walls by categories such as phonetic

patterns, grammatical structures, or thematic groupings, with the aim of boosting structured learning.

- ***Teaching Vocabulary with Color***

Using color in vocabulary instruction advocates for long-term retention and active involvement. Studies suggest that color-coded materials elevate word retention by visually distinguishing between different word categories (Anuthama, 2010). When applying this strategy, teachers can use colored chalk, pens, or digital tools to highlight word meanings, parts of speech, and morphological structures. As a result, vocabulary lessons grow more interactive and memorable, and students are more likely to benefit from instruction.

2.2 Grammar

Being the structural framework of any language, grammar governs how words are combined to convey meaning accurately and effectively. It comprises a set of rules and patterns that guide sentence formation, word order, and the correct use of linguistic elements. A solid understanding of grammar is required for clear and coherent communication, both in speech and writing, and it, learners may find it difficult to express ideas precisely or to comprehend the intended meaning of others. As such, grammar remains a central component of language learning and instruction across all levels of proficiency.

2.2.1 Definition

Grammar is a primary constituent of linguistic structure that includes the rules and principles which govern the formation of words, phrases, and sentences in a language. Scholars have debated its nature and role in language learning, with definitions varying across historical and modern linguistic traditions. Some of them view grammar as a set of prescriptive norms that regulate proper language use, and others consider it a descriptive system that reflects the natural evolution of language in diverse communicative contexts.

From an applied linguistics perspective, Larsen-Freeman and DeCarrico (2019) unpack the intricacies surrounding definitions of grammar and articulate that the term can imply different meanings depending on context. Due to this, they distinguish between prescriptive and descriptive grammars.

- ***Prescriptive Grammar***

This type of grammar dictates the correct and incorrect language use and contains “rules that make distinctions between correct and incorrect forms” (p. 19). This framework stresses the difference between standard and non-standard language forms, with the assignment of prestige to the former by deeming it “correct” or “proper”, while marginalizing the latter as “incorrect” or “substandard”.

- ***Descriptive Grammar***

In opposition, descriptive grammar strives to objectively document how language is actually used without making value judgments. It identifies rules as patterns that speakers unconsciously follow as well as categorizes grammatical and ungrammatical constructions based on natural speech patterns. In its descriptive sense, grammar consists of rules of syntax, which “specify how words and phrases combine to form sentences”, and morphology, which “specify how word forms are constructed” (p. 19). Descriptive grammar, from a linguistic perspective, involves a thorough exploration of language that extends beyond syntax and morphology to include aspects such as phonetics, phonology, semantics, and lexis (vocabulary).

For applied linguists, the primary concern is pedagogical grammar, which is tailored to meet the needs of second-language learners and educators. While second-language grammar instruction incorporates some prescriptive rules associated with standard language varieties, pedagogical grammar corresponds more closely with descriptive grammar due to its

broader coverage of linguistic structures (Odlin, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & DeCarrico, 2019). On top of this, some linguistic grammars maintain a narrow scope, whereas pedagogical grammars tend to be more diverse through integrating concepts from both formal and functional grammar approaches (Odlin, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & DeCarrico, 2019).

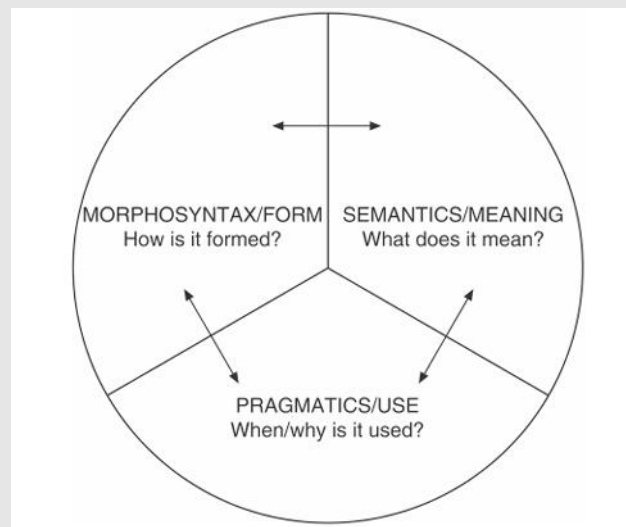
- ***Formal Grammar***

Formal grammar directs its focus towards the structural aspects of language through analyzing how syntax and morphology function within a system. Traditional grammar falls into this category the way generative grammar does, which outlines abstract rules that dictate sentence formation (Chomsky, 1957, 1965, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & DeCarrico, 2019). Within this framework, transformational grammar and later minimalist approaches view grammar as an innate mental system responsible for generating well-formed sentences (Chomsky, 1981, 1995, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & DeCarrico, 2019). This approach prioritizes rule-based structure over communicative use.

- ***Functional Grammar***

In a different vein, functional grammar magnifies how language operates in real-world communication. Developed in response to the limitations of formal models, it considers how grammar is used in social and discourse contexts (Hymes, 1972, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & DeCarrico, 2019). A primary concept in functional grammar is communicative competence, which extends beyond grammatical accuracy to include pragmatic and sociolinguistic appropriateness. Hymes (1972, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & DeCarrico, 2019) holds that language proficiency requires knowledge of rules in addition to the ability to apply them appropriately in different social settings.

Figure 2. *Interconnected Dimensions of Grammar* (Larsen-Freeman & DeCarrico, 2019, p. 30)



2.2.2 Importance of Grammar in Relation to Writing

Grammar is an indispensable aspect of writing concerned with providing the core structure mandatory for coherence, precision, and communicative effectiveness. Noguchi (1991) explains that formal grammar instruction has historically been associated with improving language skills, particularly writing. A large number of educators firmly hold that teaching grammar strengthens writing abilities and guarantees proficiency, stating that “many believe instruction in formal grammar enhances, even ensures, the development of good writing.” (p. 1).

Nevertheless, over the past fifty years, this assumption has faced increasing scrutiny. Critics argue that formal grammar instruction does not significantly enhance students’ writing and instead consumes valuable instructional time that could be better spent on more effective teaching methods. Even though such scholarly debates regarding the extent to which explicit grammar instruction contributes to writing proficiency are ongoing, there still exists an abundance of literature proving the primary position it holds in bettering linguistic accuracy and textual clarity.

Nemouchi (2007) suggests that grammatical competence is fundamentally connected to writing proficiency since students who master grammatical conventions demonstrate improved control over sentence structure and textual cohesion. Moreover, Myhill (2005, as cited in Nemouchi, 2007) posits that a sufficient understanding of grammar gives way to writers to make deliberate syntactic choices, thereby enhancing the sophistication and persuasiveness of their compositions, as well as allowing more variability in their productions.

To further support this, some empirical research validates the claim that grammatical proficiency directly impacts writing quality. Among which is that of Nemouchi (2007), who conducted a longitudinal study at the University of Constantine that revealed a strong correlation between students' grammatical accuracy and their overall writing performance. The study employed a mixed-methods methodology that utilized writing samples, structured assessments, and statistical analysis. The outcome of such study unveiled a strong correlation between students' grammatical accuracy and their overall writing proficiency. Those with higher grammatical competence demonstrated superior ability in structuring coherent and well-organized texts, which serves to reinforce the necessity of grammar instruction in writing curricula.

In parallel, Norris and Ortega (2000, as cited in Daskan, 2023) carried out a meta-analysis of multiple second-language grammar instruction studies, with the aim being to assess the impact of explicit grammar instruction on the advancement of writing capabilities. By way of synthesizing data from a variety of empirical investigations, they came out with the conclusion that explicit grammar instruction dramatically improves writing proficiency, which is achieved through equipping students with the linguistic tools necessary for the construction of syntactically accurate and stylistically refined texts. Such findings supported the notion that students who received formal grammar instruction exhibited greater

improvements in writing accuracy compared to those who relied solely on immersion-based or implicit learning approaches.

Rossiter (2021) compares grammar to a navigational system and underlines its role in organizing sentence structure and ensuring that meanings are clear and accurate. In the same respect, Schleppegrell (2003, as cited in Nemouchi, 2007) undertook a discourse analysis study that sheds light on the role of grammar in academic writing across different genres. With the textual analysis of student essays, the study found that different writing genres (e.g., argumentative essays, research reports, and reflective writing) require distinct grammatical structures. The findings validated that mastery of grammar permits writers to adapt their writing to various discourse types, ultimately improving communication in both academic and professional contexts.

Grammatical proficiency is a fundamental requirement for success in both academic and professional domains. Owing to this, Daskan (2023) brings to light the necessity of grammar in scholarly discourse by arguing that a solid grammatical foundation makes it possible for students to articulate complex ideas with precision and coherence. Furthermore, Myhill (2005, as cited in Nemouchi, 2007) states that grammatical precision strengthens credibility in professional settings, while errors in language use lead employers to question a writer's attention to detail and intellectual capabilities.

The ongoing discussion about the most effective approach to grammar instruction remains. From one viewpoint, some scholars advocate for explicit instruction, wherein grammar is taught systematically and in isolation. From an opposing viewpoint, others favor an integrated approach that embeds grammar within authentic, contextualized writing tasks. In connection with this subject, Spada and Tomita (2010, as cited in Daskan, 2023) conducted an experimental study where they compared the effects of explicit grammar to

implicit grammar instruction on writing proficiency. The investigation included control and experimental groups, where one group received direct, rule-based grammar instruction, while the other acquired grammar implicitly through writing activities.

The results implied that explicit grammar instruction led to substantive growth in grammatical accuracy within written tasks. However, Myhill (2005, as cited in Nemouchi, 2007) argued that infusing grammar instruction within writing stimulates long-term retention and allows students to apply grammatical principles in meaningful, real-world contexts.

2.2.3 Grammar Teaching and Learning Difficulties

Even though grammar provides the essential rules and structures for needed for effective communication, mastering it can prove to be complex and demanding for learners. Such difficulties may spring from the abstract nature of grammatical concepts, differences between learners' first and target languages, or the cognitive load involved in applying rules accurately in real-time communication. On the other hand, teachers may find it challenging to present grammar in engaging and accessible ways that promote both understanding and practical use. As such, these challenges must be further investigated since they underline the need for thoughtful instructional approaches that address learners' needs, all the while supporting long-term grammatical development.

2.2.3.1 Teaching Difficulties

Delivering grammar lessons presents profound challenges for instructors, especially in EFL settings. Some empirical research has documented various primary hurdles that range from limited resources and institutional constraints, to pedagogical challenges and student-related factors (Daskan, 2023). These difficulties hinder the effectiveness of grammar instruction all the while influencing learners' overall language acquisition.

Numerous teachers report a lack of sufficient training, materials, and institutional support when teaching grammar. According to Waseel (2020), grammar instruction is, in many instances, dominated by the grammar-translation method, which does not always reflect the modern communicative approaches and fails to meet many learners' particular needs. Besides, limited access to technology-enhanced teaching tools restricts educators from implementing engaging instructional methods (Yusob, 2018, as cited in Waseel, 2020).

A prominent issue outlined in research is the proficiency level of educators. Based on Yusob's (2018) work, a considerable number of non-native English teachers lack confidence in their own grammatical competence, which affects their ability to provide clear explanations and address student inquiries. His work also revealed that teachers faced six primary challenges, including lack of experience, inadequate resources, and negative perceptions of grammar instruction. Furthermore, Borg (2003, as cited in Daskan, 2023) emphasizes that teachers' personal views on grammar instruction heavily influence their pedagogical decisions, which can lead to an inconsistent variability in instructional methods.

Another persistent challenge is coordinating instruction with student expectations. Many students perceive grammar learning as rather tedious task, which reduces their motivation and engagement in lessons (Daskan, 2023). This is especially evident in contexts where learners favor spoken fluency over grammatical accuracy, which necessitates teachers to deprioritize explicit grammar instruction despite its importance in academic and professional communication (Waseel, 2020).

2.2.3.2 Learning Difficulties

Grammar learning forms a persistent and enduring challenge for a multitude of reasons, namely its inherent abstract and complex nature, the difficulty in applying and

transferring rules across contexts, interference from learners' first language, and learners' cognitive and motivational constraints.

- ***The Abstract and Complex Nature of Grammar***

A major barrier emerges from the abstract nature of grammar, which makes it challenging for students to internalize and apply rules effectively. Noguchi (1991, p. 4) notes that formal grammar is frequently perceived as uninteresting or excessively difficult, which prevents students from mastering it adequately. Empirical studies reinforce this through demonstrating that learners regularly struggle with intricate grammatical concepts such as tense-aspect systems, conditionals, and passive structures (Daskan, 2023). Additionally, certain grammatical forms, though theoretically comprehensible, become challenging when students attempt to apply them in practical usage (Ajaj, 2022).

- ***Limited Transferability of Grammar Knowledge to Writing***

Another serious impediment is the inability to properly apply and transfer grammatical knowledge to writing contexts. Noguchi (1991, p. 4) asserts that even when students successfully learn grammatical rules, they are still very likely to fail when applying them in their written production. Likewise, Mustafa (2021) credits this issue to the way grammar is taught, most times taking place in isolated drills rather than in integrated, meaningful writing activities. Studies have found that students who receive traditional grammar instruction perform well in controlled exercises but struggle to use grammar accurately in free composition tasks (Kifli & Nasution, 2023). This limitation pushes forward the need for grammar instruction to be embedded within authentic writing tasks.

- ***Interference from the First Language***

Learners consistently rely on syntactic structures from their first language (L1) when they do not find equivalent forms in the target language (TL), which causes persistent grammatical errors. (Daskan, 2023). Noguchi (1991, p. 4) showcases that when students attempt to transfer grammar rules from L1 to English, misapplications frequently occur, particularly in areas such as article usage, tense selection, and word order. Mustafa (2021) also Draws attention to the fact that this challenge is more pronounced among learners whose native language follows a different syntactic structure from English.

- ***Cognitive and Motivational Barriers***

Motivational and cognitive barriers add another layer of difficulty to grammar learning. A considerable number of students perceive grammar as tedious and overly rule-based, which prompts a lack of engagement and overall disinterest (Daskan, 2023). Traditional methods that focus on memorization and error correction actively contribute to heightening anxiety as opposed to competence (Ajaj, 2022). Consequently, learners repeatedly express frustration over their inability to use grammar fluently in communication, which suggests that more interactive and communicative approaches may enhance engagement and retention (Kifli & Nasution, 2023).

2.2.4 Strategies to Teach Grammar

Grammar can be taught using a large and continuously growing number of strategies, each designed to meet different learning styles and instructional goals. Some methods focus on rule-based instruction, while others shed light on communication and context.

- ***Traditional Approach to Grammar Instruction***

The traditional approach to teaching grammar focuses on explicit instruction of rules, syntax, morphology, and phonetics (Rahman & Ahmed, 2017). This method commonly involves rote memorization, which means learning through repetition without a true understanding of the meaning or underlying concepts, and translation exercises that focus on written language over spoken communication. Although criticized for its lack of contextual application, this approach provides learners with a strong grammatical foundation (Rahman & Ahmed, 2017).

- ***Structural Approach to Grammar***

This approach divides language study into grammatical forms and grammatical structures before considering lexical meaning (Rahman & Ahmed, 2017). It assumes that second-language learners must become proficient in both lexical meanings (the meaning of individual words) and grammatical structures (how words are arranged in a sentence) through deliberate exposure and practice. The structured presentation of language patterns helps learners develop a systematic understanding of grammar. That is to say, the presentation of grammar in an organized and clear way provides learners with the opportunity to gradually build a logical and consistent understanding of how grammatical rules work, which makes it easier for them to apply these rules correctly in language use (Rahman & Ahmed, 2017).

- ***Notional-Functional Approach***

The notional-functional approach focuses on the communicative purposes of language, which organizes grammar instruction around notions (concepts such as time, size, and movement) and functions (communicative acts like apologizing and inviting) (Rahman & Ahmed, 2017). This categorization of grammar within communicative contexts improves

learners' ability to use grammar meaningfully in real-life interactions (Rahman & Ahmed, 2017).

- ***Drills as a Grammar Teaching Strategy***

Drilling involves repetitive practice of sentence structures that make an effort to strengthen grammatical accuracy. This strategy includes substitution tables, sentence pattern exercises, and structured dialogues to help students internalize grammatical rules through repetition (Rahman & Ahmed, 2017). Yet, even though it is effective for accuracy, excessive reliance on drills could potentially limit learners' ability to use grammar flexibly in spontaneous communication (Rahman & Ahmed, 2017).

- ***Contextualized Clues for Grammar Learning***

Providing contextual clues helps learners understand grammar in meaningful settings. Exercises that require students to complete sentences, respond to prompts, or derive grammatical structures from authentic texts permit them to grasp grammar in its functional use (Rahman & Ahmed, 2017). This approach moves beyond isolated rule memorization and encourages comprehension through context (Rahman & Ahmed, 2017).

- ***Communicative Grammar Teaching***

Communicative activities urge learners to use grammar in real-life situations instead of isolated exercises. Information-gap tasks, opinion-based discussions, and role-playing activities create possibilities for learners to apply grammar dynamically (Rahman & Ahmed, 2017). This approach adheres to communicative language teaching (CLT), which prioritizes fluency in communication and meaning over rigid grammatical accuracy (Rahman & Ahmed, 2017).

- ***Error Correction in Grammar Teaching***

Error correction strategies vary depending on instructional goals. Teachers must determine whether an error hinders communication or is part of the natural language acquisition process before deciding to intervene. Immediate correction may be useful for grammatical precision, while delayed feedback supports fluency development. A balanced approach helps learners refine their grammar without discouraging communication and planting hesitance due to the fear of making mistakes (Thornbury, 1999, as cited in Ur, 2006).

2.3 Spelling

Spelling stands as a core component of written proficiency and shapes how language is visually represented and interpreted. It involves adhering to established letter sequences that form recognizable and accepted word forms. Accurate spelling reinforces textual legibility and reader comprehension, whereas inconsistent or incorrect forms may take a toll on meaning and reduce the credibility of written work. As an integral part of language instruction, spelling contributes not only to surface correctness but also to broader language awareness and literacy growth.

2.3.1 Definition

Different scholars and linguistic sources deliver a range of definitions of spelling, which demonstrate its importance in proper communication and literacy. Montgomery (2007) states that spelling is the link between alphabetic symbols, which are known as graphemes, and phonemes, which are the smallest distinguishable sounds in speech. Fulk and Stormont-Spurgin (1995, as cited in Montgomery, 2007) explain that spelling involves accurately sequencing letters without relying on contextual clues, which deems it necessary to process a higher number of grapheme-to-phoneme correspondences.

Moreover, according to Indrisano and Squire (2000), “spelling written English requires recall strategies that elicit complete information about a word if it is to be produced correctly according to standard orthographic conventions.” (p. 192). Spelling is more than just the correct arrangement of letters; it is a complex cognitive process that encompasses numerous linguistic and mental functions. Researchers in fields such as cognitive science, neuropsychology, and education study spelling as a linguistic skill as well as a means to understand broader cognitive mechanisms. Spelling errors, in particular, help bring to light the mental strategies writers use, consequently revealing whether words are memorized or constructed through applied knowledge (Indrisano & Squire, 2000).

2.3.1.1 Models of Spelling

Based on the established definitions, spelling is both a linguistic skill and a cognitive process that researchers have analyzed through various theoretical models. These models explain how individuals learn, process, and apply spelling knowledge, which gives a deeper understanding of the mental mechanisms underlying written language. Four of the main models are outlined.

- ***Serial Models***

These models describe spelling as a step-by-step process in which letters are recalled and written in a specific sequence. Research by Jensen (1962, as cited in Indrisano & Squire, 2000) suggests that spelling errors commonly follow a serial position effect, meaning that letters at the beginning and end of words tend to be recalled more accurately than those in the middle. To add, Houghton et al., (1994, as cited in Indrisano & Squire, 2000) expand on this model by distinguishing between competence errors, which result from incomplete word representations, and performance errors, which occur due to momentary lapses in spelling execution.

- ***Connectionist Models***

Connectionist models, also known as parallel distributed processing (PDP) models, emphasize that spelling is guided by an interconnected neural network rather than a strict sequential process. According to Olson and Caramazza (1994, as cited in Indrisano & Squire, 2000), these models propose that learning occurs by strengthening connections between phonemes, graphemes, and word structures. In the same matter, Plaut et al., (1996, as cited in Indrisano & Squire, 2000) argue that spelling proficiency is influenced by word frequency and orthographic regularity, with frequently used words being easier to recall. Computational models like NETspell “test the power of connectionist models to spell from dictation; that is, from phonological representations to written ones.” (p. 196). However, it struggles with homophones and irregular words, which displays that spelling requires more than phoneme-grapheme mapping alone.

- ***Dual-Route Models***

Dual-route models suggest that spelling relies on two cognitive pathways: a lexical route, which retrieves whole-word spellings from memory, and a sublexical (phonological) route, which constructs spellings based on phoneme-grapheme rules. In order to support this model, Barry (1994, as cited in Indrisano & Squire, 2000) shows that skilled spellers activate both routes depending on the word's familiarity. Seymour and Evans (1994, as cited in Indrisano & Squire, 2000) studied dysgraphia, which is a neurological condition that makes forming letters and spelling words difficult, and found that individuals with lexical route impairments struggle with familiar word spelling, while those with phonological route impairments find it difficult to spell new or phonetically regular words. Owing to this, Kreiner (1992, 1996, as cited in Indrisano & Squire, 2000) suggests that the choice of route is

influenced by word familiarity and polygraphy (the availability of multiple spelling patterns for a phoneme).

- ***Developmental Stage Models***

Developmental stage models propose that spelling ability progresses through distinct cognitive stages in place of being an instantaneous skill. Read (1971, 1975, 1986, as cited in Indrisano & Squire, 2000) and Henderson (1992, as cited in Indrisano & Squire, 2000) describe spelling development as a gradual shift from spelling words based on how they sound (phonetic spelling) to using standard, correct spellings (conventional spelling). However, Goswami and Bryant (1990, as cited in Indrisano & Squire, 2000) criticize strict, stage-based models by arguing that spelling ability emerges through continuous interaction between phonological, orthographic, and lexical knowledge rather than fixed rigid stages.

2.3.2 Importance of Spelling in Relation to Writing

Spelling has regularly been marginalized within literacy instruction despite the position it holds in writing proficiency. Certain researchers prioritize other skills like reading and writing, while others perceive the English spelling system as too irregular and unpredictable to warrant direct instruction (Simonsen & Gunter, 2001, as cited in Reed, 2012). Although most primary teachers self-report that they teach spelling, classroom observations reveal that less than 4% of reading instructional time is devoted to spelling-related activities (Cooke, Slee, & Young, 2008; Foorman et al., 2006, as cited in Reed, 2012).

Still, some bodies of literature do recognize the weight of spelling. Effective spelling ability enhances a learner's capacity to recognize words quickly, construct meaningful written communication, and develop a strong linguistic foundation (Ortikova et al., 2023).

Research shows that knowing a word's spelling strengthens its mental representation and makes it easier to recognize and retrieve during reading and writing. According to

Ortikova et al., (2023), spelling instruction optimizes word recognition skills through reinforcing the orthographic structure of words. Similarly, Mahmoud (2013) highlights that the inability to spell correctly not only affects writing quality but also hinders vocabulary development and reading fluency, as spelling errors can interfere with word recognition and meaning-making.

To add, spelling is of vital importance to cognitive processing because it reduces the cognitive load required for written expression. Writers who struggle with spelling routinely divert their mental resources towards word formation at the expense of focusing on higher order writing skills like organization, coherence, and argumentation (Ortikova et al., 2023). Building upon this, Mahmoud (2013) states that poor spelling ability has the capacity to lead to frustration and a lack of confidence in writing, which ultimately discourages students from engaging in complex written tasks altogether. Beyond that, spelling competence assists in automaticity in writing and permits students to focus on constructing clear and coherent texts instead of being preoccupied with spelling errors (Ortikova et al., 2023).

For EFL learners, spelling is especially challenging due to the irregular nature of English spelling rules. Unlike languages with a phonetic structure, English presents multiple inconsistencies in sound-letter relationships. Such irregularities create hurdles for learners in mastering spelling rules. Arabic-speaking learners, in particular, struggle with spelling because of the structural differences between Arabic and English orthography. Arabic has a more consistent phonetic spelling system, whereas English includes silent letters, irregular spellings, and multiple pronunciations for the same letter combinations (Mahmoud, 2013). These differences add to frequent spelling errors among Arab EFL learners, which demonstrates the need for targeted spelling instruction.

Furthermore, some educators downplay the importance of spelling, assuming that modern spell-checking tools compensate for poor spelling ability. However, research indicates that spell-checkers are not always reliable, as they fail to detect context-based spelling errors, such as homophones (e.g., “their” vs. “there”) or misspellings that result in real words (e.g., “form” instead of “from”) (Mahmoud, 2013). As a result, reliance on technology does not eliminate the need for explicit spelling instruction especially for EFL learners who need structured support in developing their spelling competence.

2.3.3 Spelling Teaching and Learning Difficulties

Accounting for the complexities of spelling in educational settings commonly brings about noteworthy challenges for both learners and instructors. Learners may encounter obstacles in internalizing orthographic patterns, especially when irregularities and exceptions are frequent within the language. On top of this, cognitive demands, inconsistent exposure, and interference from spoken forms can further affect accurate spelling. For educators, selecting effective methodologies that balance memorization, pattern recognition, and contextual application remains a persistent concern. These difficulties underscore the need for strategic and adaptive approaches in spelling instruction.

2.3.3.1 Teaching Difficulties

Spelling instruction presents a considerable number of challenges for educators. Even though spelling is essential for written communication, an plethora of obstacles hinder its effective teaching, especially in EFL contexts (Davletyarova, 2022). Such challenges stem from the irregularities of the English spelling system, the discrepancy between phonemes and graphemes, and limitations in instructional methods. It is also important to note that external factors such as classroom conditions, student motivation, and teacher training complicate spelling instruction even further (Hidayati, 2018).

A primary difficulty in teaching spelling arises from the complexity of the English orthographic system. Phonetic languages' spelling and pronunciation are most often in parallel alignment, which is not the case for English, as it contains numerous inconsistencies that make it challenging for learners to apply systematic rules (Davletyarova, 2022). English words can be classified into different groups based on their spelling predictability, with some words adhering to phonetic principles (e.g., bed, not, sit), while others involve silent letters (knee, sign) or irregular phoneme-grapheme correspondences (tough, though, through) (Davletyarova, 2022). These inconsistencies tend to result in rote memorization rather than rule-based learning, and as a result, it increases the cognitive load on learners and makes spelling instruction a much more demanding task.

Complementarily, spelling challenges are heightened by students' reliance on phonetic strategies. Many learners, predominantly those from languages with consistent phoneme-grapheme correspondence, make an effort to spell English words based on their pronunciation and in turn leading to frequent errors (Davletyarova, 2022). To address this, teachers must implement strategies that encourage visual word recognition instead of relying solely on phonetic decoding. Still, integrating such approaches requires additional instructional time and structured learning activities, which may not always be feasible in traditional classrooms.

Beyond linguistic complexities, teachers also face pedagogical difficulties in spelling instruction. A major challenge is the limited instructional time dedicated to spelling. In many educational systems, spelling is commonly incorporated into broader language lessons as opposed to being taught explicitly (Hidayati, 2018). Research indicates that spelling receives markedly less focus compared to other language components, such as grammar and vocabulary, which leaves students with very few practice opportunities (Davletyarova, 2022).

Accordingly, students battle with forming consistent spelling habits, and teachers lack adequate time to reinforce spelling patterns effectively.

Equally important, teaching resources and methodologies bring about additional challenges. A lot of spelling programs rely heavily on traditional rote-learning techniques, such as word lists and repetition exercises, which may not be effective for all learners (Hidayati, 2018). The absence of multimodal learning strategies, such as phonics-based approaches, interactive spelling games, and dictation exercises, tightens constraints on the effectiveness of spelling instruction. Teachers ought to balance explicit spelling instruction with engaging and meaningful activities to help students internalize correct spelling patterns. Despite this, curricular constraints and standardized testing pressures consistently impose limitations on the flexibility needed to adopt innovative approaches.

Spelling instruction is also affected by external factors such as classroom conditions, student motivation, and teacher preparedness. Large class sizes, markedly in EFL settings, limit teachers' ability to deliver individualized spelling support (Hidayati, 2018). In overcrowded classrooms, teachers grapple with monitoring students' spelling development, identifying common errors, and providing tailored feedback. On top of this, student motivation is vitally important to spelling acquisition. Numerous learners perceive spelling as a monotonous and memorization-heavy task, which takes a toll on their engagement with spelling instruction (Davletyarova, 2022).

Alongside that, teacher training and professional development also adds to the difficulties in spelling instruction. An extensive number of educators receive limited formal training in effective spelling methodologies, which in turn leads to the reliance on traditional, less effective teaching strategies (Hidayati, 2018). In parallel, the availability of teaching

materials, such as phonics-based spelling programs or digital tools, varies across schools, which influences the quality of instruction even more.

2.3.3.2 Learning Difficulties

One of the leading reasons EFL learners wrestle with spelling is the non-phonetic nature of the English language. As it is known, English lacks a one-to-one correspondence between sounds (phonemes) and their written representations (graphemes) because of its overall irregular nature. Such inconsistency very regularly leads to confusion among learners, namely those whose native languages have more predictable orthographic systems (Hussain, 2022). Likewise, irregular spelling patterns, silent letters, and homophones heighten the complexity of the acquisition of correct spelling (El-Dakhs & Mitchell, 2011).

Notably, research has shown that L1 interference highly affect spelling acquisition in EFL contexts. Arabic-speaking learners, for instance, experience difficulty with English vowels, as Arabic has a different phonemic structure. This ends up generating errors such as vowel omissions and substitutions (Vaishnav, 2024). In a similar vein, the absence of certain consonants in Arabic triggers mispronunciations and spelling errors, such as confusion between /p/ and /b/ sounds (Sultani & Himat, 2021).

Other than linguistic challenges, cognitive processing difficulties also add to the existence of spelling errors. Spelling necessitates a combination of phonological awareness, orthographic memory, and morphological knowledge. That said, a vast number of EFL learners have limited exposure to systematic spelling instruction, leading to fragmented understanding and inconsistent application of spelling rules (Hussain, 2022).

Moreover, deficiencies in spelling instruction exacerbate learning difficulties. Some studies indicate that EFL curricula tend to dedicated the most time to vocabulary and grammar over explicit spelling instruction, which consequently leaves learners with

inadequate strategies for realizing and correcting errors (Sultani & Himat, 2021). In the same matter, many teachers lack specialized training in spelling instruction, consequently leading to reliance on rote memorization techniques instead of phonics-based or morphology-based approaches (Vaishnav, 2024).

A critical impediment to spelling proficiency is the shortage of standardized spelling instruction in many EFL classrooms. In particular cases, spelling is not treated as a core skill but instead as a minor aspect of writing, which leads to inconsistent teaching methods across different educational institutions (El-Dakhs & Mitchell, 2011). Such an inconsistency results in learners developing varying levels of spelling competence and consistently depending on the instructional approaches used in their specific learning environments.

Spelling errors can have profound consequences on students' overall writing skills. Some studies have found that spelling difficulties hinder fluency in writing, as students must pause quite frequently to recall or guess the correct spelling of words (Hussain, 2022). These constant pauses disrupt their cognitive processing and thought flow and can lead to shorter, less coherent written output. Along with that, poor spelling typically leads to reduced confidence in writing and makes students reluctant to express their ideas in written form (Sultani & Himat, 2021).

Another notable outcome is that spelling difficulties affect the overall academic performance. Research conducted on high school graduates found that students who struggle with spelling tend to perform worse in writing assessments, as their compositions contain frequent errors that obscure meaning (El-Dakhs & Mitchell, 2011). In professional contexts, deficient spelling can also negatively impact job prospects because it creates a negative impression of written communication skills (Vaishnav, 2024).

Given the challenges outlined above, effective spelling instruction is vital for increasing learners' proficiency. Hussain (2022) suggests that teachers should adopt a multimodal approach that integrates phonics-based instruction, morphology training, and explicit spelling strategies. In a related manner, frequent formative assessments and personalized feedback can help students recognize and correct their recurring spelling errors (Sultani & Himat, 2021).

A remarkably efficient strategy is contextualized spelling instruction, which involves teaching spelling in meaningful contexts instead of isolated word lists. The study of El-Dakhs & Mitchell (2011) have revealed that students who learn spelling through writing exercises, peer reviews, and interactive activities develop stronger retention and application skills compared to those who rely solely on memorization techniques.

Likewise, technology-assisted learning tools, such as spell-checking software, digital flashcards, and online spelling games, can reinforce correct spelling patterns and make learning more engaging for students (Vaishnav, 2024). Regardless, excessive dependence on spell-checkers should be avoided, as these tools do not always recognize context-based errors and make its users rather lazy.

2.3.4 Strategies to Teach Spelling

- ***Phonics Teaching Methods***

Phonics-based instruction builds on the alphabetic system through teaching the relationships between phonemes (sounds) and graphemes (letters). Such method equips learners with decoding skills that grants them the ability to spell words by sounding them out and applying consistent patterns. Montgomery (2006) points out several phonics teaching strategies, which include synthetic phonics, analytic phonics, and embedded phonics.

- Synthetic Phonics teaches students to convert letters into sounds and blend them to form words (e.g., /k/ + /a/ + /t/ = cat). This method is systematic and explicit, which deems it effective for early readers.
- Analytic Phonics encourages learners to analyze familiar words and recognize common spelling patterns in place of sounding out each letter individually (e.g., recognizing -ight in light and sight).
- Embedded Phonics: Integrates phonics instruction into broader literacy activities, such as reading books, instead of teaching it as an isolated skill.

Phonics instruction is significantly advantageous for spelling because it provides learners with systematic tools to decode words. Even so, Montgomery (2006) notes that phonics alone is not sufficient, as irregular English words (e.g., said, friend, one) do not always follow predictable phoneme-grapheme patterns. Hence, phonics should be supplemented with other methods to address exceptions and build spelling fluency.

- ***‘Look and Say’ Methods***

The ‘Look and Say’ method dedicates its focus to whole-word recognition instead of phonemic decoding. Students are urged to memorize high-frequency words by sight, consistently implementing flashcards, word walls, and repeated exposure in texts. This approach is especially useful for irregular words that cannot be easily sounded out phonetically (e.g., their, could, come). Montgomery (2006) explains that this method is effective for building automatic word recognition, which in turn supports fluent reading and writing. That said, the main drawback of the ‘Look and Say’ approach is that it does not equip learners with strategies to decode unfamiliar words. With the absence of phonics knowledge, students who rely solely on visual memory are likely to struggle when spelling new words that they have not previously encountered.

- ***Whole Language Approaches and 'Real Books'***

The whole language approach advocates for the idea that spelling should be learned in the context of meaningful reading and writing activities, as opposed to using isolated drills. Such method urges students to infer spelling patterns naturally while engaging with “real books”, which serves to provide authentic language exposure (Montgomery, 2006). Advocates of this approach argue that immersing students in rich, contextualized reading experiences improves their spelling intuition. As an alternative to memorizing word lists, learners develop spelling competence organically via frequent encounters with correctly spelled words in texts.

However, Montgomery (2006) points out that this method can be ineffective for students who require explicit instruction, particularly those with learning difficulties such as dyslexia. In addition to this, even if whole language approaches build a love for reading and writing, they still lack structured spelling instruction which makes it difficult for struggling learners to recognize and internalize spelling patterns.

Montgomery (2006) also suggests that the best approach is a balanced literacy program that integrates whole language methods with phonics-based and explicit spelling instruction. That is to say, the ultimate spelling program would be one that incorporates multiple approaches because it makes it possible to accommodate diverse learner needs. A balanced instructional framework that integrates phonics, word recognition, and contextual learning ensures that students develop strong and flexible spelling skills.

Conclusion

In summary, vocabulary, grammar, and spelling are the rightful structural elements of the writing skill, and should be given most, if not all, instructional time. A strong vocabulary opens way for a variety of expressions, grammar secures the structural accuracy needed, and

spelling maintains clarity in written communication. This chapter made it the more evident that learners and educators face differing challenges, including instructional limitations, linguistic complexities, and cognitive barriers. For this, research delivers on the necessity of structured and distinct teaching strategies to overcome these difficulties, integrating explicit instruction, contextualized learning, and interactive methodologies. Addressing these aspects effectively is the optimal way to heighten students' writing competence and plant the seed for a more accurate and confident communication in academic and professional settings.

Chapter Three: The Methodology For this Study

Introduction

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Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology adopted in this study and tackles the approach taken to collect and analyze data. It commences with describing the research paradigm, approach, and design, followed by an explanation of the data collection methods and their specifications. Next, it delves into how data were collected by retelling all of the procedures. After that, it mentions the data analysis methods used to interpret both quantitative and qualitative findings. Lastly, the chapter moves onto discussing the procedures for participant selection and ethical considerations that were taken into account in order to ensure the credibility and integrity of the study, in addition to discussing study's rationale and motives.

3.1 Research Methodology: Theoretical Background, Choices, and Rationale

The first step in carrying any research study is choosing the most appropriate methodology in accordance to the set aims. A well-defined theoretical framework is of dire need in research as it serves as the foundation for all methodological decisions. Grant and Osanloo (2014) stress that a theoretical framework functions as the “blueprint” of a study that shapes the research design, guides data collection and analysis, and ensures coherence throughout the dissertation. The absence of strong theoretical foundation risks making the research atheoretical, which can lead to a lack of clarity and limited usefulness of findings (Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

Furthermore, the theoretical framework supplies a structured lens through which a research problem is examined, which secures that every aspect of the study, from problem formulation to methodology and analysis, is systematically parallel to one another. Hence, the explicit integration of theory into methodological choices allows researchers to enhance the credibility and rigor of their work, ultimately contributing to the broader academic discourse in a meaningful way.

3.1.1 Research Paradigm

The selection of a research paradigm is an inherent step in any study, as it determines how knowledge is understood and how data is collected and analyzed. Mixed methods research, which integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches, requires a paradigm that accommodates methodological flexibility and practical problem-solving. In the case of the present study, Pragmatism serves this purpose well, as it is described as:

A deconstructive paradigm that debunks concepts such as “truth” and “reality” and focuses instead on “what works” as the truth regarding the research questions under investigation. Pragmatism rejects the either/or choices associated with the paradigm wars, advocates for the use of mixed methods in research, and acknowledges that the values of the researcher play a large role in interpretation of results. (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003a, as cited in Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 14)

Unlike paradigms that strictly adhere to either an objective or subjective view of reality, pragmatism makes it possible for multiple perspectives to coexist, which makes it particularly useful in studies that require diverse data sources and analytical techniques (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Ontologically, pragmatism holds that reality is both singular and multiple, meaning that while an external reality exists, individuals interpret and interact with it in different ways (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). This ontological position permits researchers to incorporate both qualitative and quantitative elements without conflict. Epistemologically, pragmatism challenges the strict division between objectivity and subjectivity, and instead views them as points along a continuum rather than opposing extremes. Depending on the stage of the research process, the level of interaction between the researcher and participants may vary. In

some instances, a highly interactive relationship is necessary to explore complex questions, while in other cases, such as testing pre-established hypotheses with previously collected quantitative data or making predictions from large-scale surveys, minimal interaction is required (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 83).

Consequently, researchers are not constrained by rigid philosophical commitments but are instead encouraged to use approaches that best serve their research objectives. A defining strength of pragmatism is its flexibility, which allows researchers to choose methods that best answer their research questions instead of being limited to a single methodological tradition (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 12). This resonates with the main doctrine of mixed methods research, where “MM (mixed methods) tradition contains a combination of the techniques found in both the QUAL and QUAN traditions.” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 31). As such, pragmatism ensures coherence between research design and methodology, all the while allowing researchers to integrate various techniques logically and effectively (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

On top of this, pragmatism is especially well-suited for studies employing an embedded case study design, where different forms of data are combined to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Through the adoption of a pragmatic paradigm, researchers can make sure that their methodological choices are guided by the research question as opposed to the rigid adherence to a specific epistemological stance (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Such adaptability makes pragmatism an essential groundwork for mixed methods research.

Ultimately, pragmatism is the most appropriate paradigm for mixed methods research due to its emphasis on practical solutions, methodological pluralism, and the integration of multiple perspectives. As Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) assert, pragmatists believe that

“either method is useful, choosing to use the full array of both QUAL and QUAN methods”, rather than being constrained by a singular paradigm (p. 82). The grounding of the study in pragmatism grants researchers the ability to make methodological choices that secure consistency with their research objectives, and in turn, leading to more meaningful and applicable findings.

3.1.2 Research Approach

The study at hand adopts a Mixed methods research approach, which makes good use of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem, and account of its multiple perspectives. Mixed methods research is particularly valuable in educational studies, as it leverages the strengths of both approaches and uses one to inform the other, which ensures that numerical data is complemented by contextual insights. As Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) note, the main premise of this approach is that “the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone.” (p. 5). Therefore, given the complex nature of English as a Foreign Language (henceforth, EFL) writing skill development and difficulties, the mixed methods research approach permits an analysis of both objective language proficiency indicators and subjective teacher experiences handling learners' writing, thereby affirming a holistic examination of the issue.

A leading rationale for adopting a Mixed methods approach is its ability to increase research validity through methodological integration. The incorporation of multiple data sources is known to increase the depth and reliability of findings. As opposed to purely quantitative research, which commonly focuses on test scores and statistical patterns, or purely qualitative research, which provides in-depth but non-generalizable insights, mixed methods research bridges these gaps through weaving together both perspectives into a single

research work. This capacity achieves an inclusive interpretation of findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Moreover, the Mixed methods approach is grounded in the pragmatic paradigm, which draws attention to methodological flexibility and prioritizes selecting the most effective research strategies based on the research question and aims at hand. As Tashakkori et al., (2021) articulate, “The emerging mixed methods approach, along with its pragmatism, provided a justification for and a place for combining QUAN and QUAL methods and approaches.” (p. 18). Pragmatism, in other words, rejects the rigid separation of quantitative and qualitative approaches and instead advocates for their combination to strengthen the explanatory scope of research.

The capacity of the mixed method approach to mitigate the limitation of using a single approach is another very essential benefit. Edmonds and Kennedy (2017) emphasize that “This approach allows researchers to further examine constructs at a “deeper” level, where the quantitative strand reveals what the qualitative strand leaves out and vice versa.” (p. 178). In the context of EFL writing research, the quantitative side yield measurable data on grammar, vocabulary, and spelling proficiency, while qualitative methods uncover teachers' first-hand experiences with correcting and handling learners' writing, what they believe they struggle with, and their overall subjective input on the issue. As such, the combination of these perspectives grants a more thorough investigation of both the linguistically measurable aspects and individual beliefs and experiences concerning the writing skill.

Additionally, Creamer (2017) highlights that mixed methods research makes it possible for both confirmatory and exploratory inquiry. Quantitative analysis simplifies testing established hypotheses, whereas qualitative exploration enables the discovery of unexpected themes. This adaptability reinforces that research findings are not only

statistically rigorous but also contextually meaningful, which renders the mixed methods approach as a dynamic and responsive approach to studying complex educational phenomena.

As demonstrated throughout this discussion, a mixed methods research approach is the most suitable choice for this study due to its ability to integrate multiple perspectives and alignment with the pragmatic paradigm. The act of combining quantitative precision with qualitative depth paves the way for the findings to be both statistically robust and contextually insightful. Its flexibility, adaptability, and ability to capture multiple dimensions of EFL writing skill challenges make it the optimal methodological choice.

3.1.3 Research Design

The study at hand employs a Mixed-methods Embedded Case Study Design to investigate the specific challenges that EFL learners encounter in writing, with a particular focus on determining whether grammar, vocabulary, or spelling poses the greatest difficulty. The integration of teachers' qualitative insights, along with quantitative data obtained from learners' proficiency tests on each aspect makes sure that a comprehensive and multi-dimensional understanding of the research problem is reached.

A case study design is deemed particularly suited for this study as it allows for an in-depth exploration of a real-world educational setting, where the complexities of language learning are shaped by multiple interrelated factors (Yin, 2017). Yin also states that a case study is appropriate when the research aims to “understand a real-world case and assume that such an understanding is likely to involve important contextual conditions pertinent to your case” (p.15).

Case studies facilitate a holistic approach through allowing for multiple forms of data collection and varied sources of evidence to be incorporated. On top of this, Yin goes further

by asserting that a case study is even more effective when it draws from “a full variety of evidence” (p. 12), which lays down grounds for a more nuanced and well-rounded examination of the research subject.

Likewise, case studies deliver flexibility in data collection, and as a result, allow researchers to adapt to a range of insights and refine their investigation accordingly. Equally, the embedded case study design is remarkably useful when a study requires an examination of multiple sub-units within a larger case, as it allows for each unit to be analyzed separately while still contributing to an overarching understanding of the phenomenon (Yin, 2017). Such structure strengthens internal validity through guaranteeing that individual components are studied in depth while maintaining their connection to the larger research context.

On top of this, the Mixed-methods Embedded Case Study Design is well-suited for research that requires both quantitative precision and qualitative depth and aims to reach a contextualized analysis (Yin, 2017). This design makes it possible for a primary research method to be supported by a secondary method and in turn integrate multiple forms of data while maintaining a clear methodological structure (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Additionally, the Mixed-methods Embedded Case Study Design presents the methodological flexibility needed by researchers to adjust their investigation based on unfolding interpretations while maintaining a structured analytical approach (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). Hence, through embedding qualitative inquiry within a primarily quantitative study—or vice versa—this design makes certain that findings are both statistically sound and contextually rich (Tashakkori et al., 2020).

The embedded nature of this research design supplies various methodological advantages. First, the incorporation of multiple forms of data is a sound approach to make sure that findings are cross-verified, which reduces the risk of methodological bias and

strengthens the overall validity of the study. As Yin (2017) puts it “Thus, any case study finding or conclusion is likely to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information” (p. 128). To elaborate, the case study component accomplishes a detailed, contextually grounded analysis that strives to make the findings interpreted within their “real-world practice” which enhances the depth and applicability of the research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017, p. 54).

Over and above this, the mixed methods approach accounts for both statistical trends and qualitative explanations, which leads to a more detailed and all-encompassing interpretation of findings that captures both measurable patterns and deeper contextual insights (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). Together, these methodological strengths add to an exhaustive and rigorous approach that maximizes the reliability, validity, and applicability of the study's findings.

3.1.4 Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods are an essential component of research, as they determine how information is systematically gathered and analyzed to address research questions. According to Zozus (2017), data management and research are covertly interrelated, as the “accuracy and validity of data have a direct effect on the conclusions drawn from them.” (p.2). In the context of research, data management refers to the processes of data collection, processing, storage, dissemination, and archiving. It encompasses the entire lifecycle of data, from its initial creation to its ultimate archiving or disposal.

This lifecycle is typically divided into three distinct phases: (1) the origination phase, where data is initially gathered; (2) the active phase, during which data is continuously accumulated and modified; and (3) the inactive phase, wherein data is no longer subject to further accumulation or modification (Zozus, 2017). Based on this, the sheer vitality of the

data collection phase becomes clearer, especially that it is the first phase of the whole data management process, meaning that the validity of the following phases depends on how well data collection was carried out.

Billups (2020) stresses that data collection methods can be broadly classified into quantitative and qualitative approaches, with each serving distinct functions in the research process. Quantitative methods focus on numerical data obtained through structured tools, while qualitative methods are “labor-intensive, focused, and complex.” (Billups, 2020, p. 11). Billups also mentions that any data collection depends on employing the appropriate data collection tools.

3.1.4.1 Students' Proficiency Tests

The first, and main, data collection tool for this study are proficiency tests for each of the three aspects of interest (vocabulary, grammar, and spelling). Proficiency tests are assessments designed to measure an individual's overall ability or competence in a language. These tests are commonly used to place learners into appropriate language courses and evaluate the language skills they have developed, irrespective of the specific curriculum or course they have followed (Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning, n.d.). According to McNamara (2000), proficiency tests “look to the future situation of language use without necessarily any reference to the previous process of teaching.” (p. 7).

3.1.4.1.1 Structure and Aim

This study utilizes proficiency tests in order to assess vocabulary, grammar, and spelling among third-year EFL learners. The vocabulary and grammar assessments were adopted from online proficiency tests provided by Oxford Online English (Oxford Online English, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). These tests consist of 40 multiple-choice questions per test which required learners to select the correct answer from given options. The spelling assessment

was designed to match the format of the vocabulary and grammar tests in terms of question quantity and scoring system. The test involved dictating 40 words, which learners were required to accurately transcribe.

The words selected for the spelling test were sourced from a study on commonly misspelled words among EFL learners (Ghafor, 2023). The selection process prioritized words deemed useful within the learners' educational context. All tests were conducted in a classroom setting, with learners given 30 minutes to complete the vocabulary and grammar tests each, and 10 minutes to write the dictated words. The scoring system for all three tests was standardized, each test totaling 40 points.

The primary aim of these proficiency tests is to identify the single most common writing difficulty among vocabulary, grammar, and spelling the target sample struggles with when they produce any type of written text. Evidently, the most challenging area will be determined by calculating the average scores for each test, with the lowest mean score indicating the greatest difficulty among the participants.

3.1.4.1.2 Validation

Considering that the vocabulary and grammar tests used in this study were adopted from Oxford Online English, which aligns with the standards of Cambridge Assessment English and the British Council, the validation process was deemed unnecessary. These institutions are internationally recognized for their expertise in English language assessment and apply rigorous evaluation procedures to make certain that the reliability and validity of their tests. Therefore, since the vocabulary and grammar assessments originated from these reputable sources, they were considered valid without any additional validation.

On top of this, the spelling test followed a dictation-based assessment, which is a conventional and standardized method for evaluating spelling proficiency. The words used in

the test were selected from a study on commonly misspelled words in order to ensure relevance to the learners' context. Since dictation is widely recognized as an effective approach to assessing spelling skills, further validation was not required either.

3.1.4.1.3 Piloting

Piloting was not conducted for the vocabulary, grammar, and spelling tests in this study, as they were either adopted from established sources or followed standard assessment procedures. As previously mentioned, the vocabulary and grammar tests originated from Oxford Online English, an organization whose materials are consistent with the standards of Cambridge Assessment English and the British Council. Owing to the fact that these tests have already undergone validation in their original contexts, piloting was unnecessary.

Similarly, the spelling test utilized a dictation method, which is a widely accepted approach to spelling assessment. Since the test adhered to a standard format and used carefully selected words from an existing study, there was no need for additional piloting. The structured nature of dictation already secures the needed consistency in administration and evaluation, which works to reinforce its suitability without requiring a preliminary testing phase.

3.1.4.1.4 Reliability

The reliability of the vocabulary and grammar tests is secured as they were adopted from Oxford Online English, which, as previously mentioned in the Piloting and Validation sections, corresponds to the standards of Cambridge Assessment English and the British Council. These institutions implement rigorous test development processes to guarantee consistent and accurate assessment of English proficiency. Since these tests have undergone extensive evaluation in their original context, their reliability is well established.

Regarding the spelling test, reliability was maintained through a standardized dictation method, which provides a consistent approach to assessing spelling accuracy. The test consisted of 40 dictated words which were selected from a study on commonly misspelled words, with relevance to the learners' context in mind. Evidently, dictation is a widely accepted method in spelling assessment, hence, it offers a reliable measure of learners' spelling proficiency.

3.1.4.2 Teachers' Questionnaire

A semi-structured questionnaire is a research instrument that combines structured and open-ended elements. Such combination opens the opportunity for respondents to provide detailed written responses while still maintaining a standardized framework for data collection. As described by Gillham (2008), this method is particularly effective for literate and educated groups because it enables participants to articulate their thoughts concisely in writing.

One of its main advantages is the fact that responses do not require transcription, which reduces the researcher's workload as well as preserves the respondent's original expression. To add, written responses tend to be more economical and focused compared to spoken responses, as they eliminate fillers and repetitions common in verbal communication. This simplifies content analysis, for researchers can easily identify and highlight substantive statements. Furthermore, semi-structured questionnaires make efficient collection of rich qualitative data with relatively little effort possible, provided the topics have been carefully selected through preliminary discussions (Gillham, 2008). As such, this flexibility makes them an effective tool in social and human sciences research, balancing the benefits of structure with the depth of qualitative insights.

3.1.4.2.1 Structure and Aim

The present study makes use of a semi-structured questionnaire as a secondary data collection instrument to explore perceptions and elicit insights from EFL teachers regarding the way they view the three aspects of interest (vocabulary, grammar, and spelling) in the context of writing, their pedagogical practices, and their recommendations for enhancing learners' writing proficiency. The incorporation of both closed- and open-ended questions is what makes the questionnaire capable of collecting quantifiable data in parallel with qualitative elaborations, hence enriching the findings with teachers' professional experiences and perspectives.

Structurally, the questionnaire is divided into four sections, each addressing a distinct aspect of the research objectives. The first section gathers background information about the respondents including their teaching experience and familiarity with third-year EFL learners at Biskra University. This demographic data strives to ensure that the responses are contextualized according to participants' professional backgrounds. The second section investigates teachers' perceptions of the relative importance of vocabulary, grammar, and spelling in writing instruction. It also intends to identify which of these aspects presents the greatest challenge for learners according to teachers' first-hand experiences correcting learners' written productions, as well as explore the perceived impact of these difficulties on overall writing performance.

The third section focuses on teaching practices and curriculum-related factors that influence learners' writing development. It delves into the frequency with which teachers explicitly address vocabulary, grammar, and spelling during instruction, in addition to their evaluations of the adequacy of the existing curriculum in supporting these skills. In addition to this, this section invites teachers to share the strategies they find most effective for enhancing learners' proficiency in each of the three areas. Lastly, the fourth section solicits

recommendations and further views from teachers regarding potential improvements in pedagogical approaches and curriculum design to better support learners' writing development.

The aim of this semi-structured questionnaire is to obtain a thorough understanding of the challenges that EFL learners encounter in their writing and to determine the extent to which vocabulary, grammar, and spelling deficiencies impact their performance, of course, all from the perspectives of teachers. Engaging experienced educators in this inquiry helps the study in generating empirical evidence that can inform targeted interventions to improve EFL writing instruction. Furthermore, the questionnaire contributes to the broader academic discourse on language learning through drawing attention to the pedagogical implications of linguistic competence in writing. The collected data will be analyzed to draw meaningful conclusions that can support curriculum refinement and instructional strategies aimed at enhancing learners' writing abilities in an EFL context.

3.1.4.2.2 Validation

In this case, validation is considered essential since the questionnaire was developed to account for the research's specific aims. Three experts in the field of English language teaching and applied linguistics reviewed and evaluated the questionnaire. These experts assessed the questionnaire for clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness in addressing the research objectives. Their feedback was incorporated to refine the wording of questions, eliminate ambiguities, add/ remove questionnaire items, and enhance the overall coherence of the instrument. Such expert validation also helps minimize potential biases and ensures that the questionnaire measures the intended constructs accurately and consistently.

3.1.4.2.3 Piloting

For this particular questionnaire, a formal piloting phase was deemed unnecessary due to its nature and the validation process it underwent. The questionnaire was designed for EFL teachers and handed to a number of experts who validated the instrument and provided structured feedback through an opinionnaire, and after the refinement of the questionnaire, it was administered to a group of teachers. In this case, both the experts who validated the questionnaire and the teacher who participated in filling it in belong to the same population, meaning that the piloting stage was implicitly imbedded in the validation stage. The opinionnaire assessed various aspects of the questionnaire, including clarity, relevance, potential ambiguities, grammatical accuracy, and the appropriateness of response categories. These aspects are also commonly addressed in the piloting phase, which makes both phases in this particular case undeniably similar to one another.

Through this validation process, the questionnaire was effectively piloted, as experts were required to critically engage with the instrument by evaluating its effectiveness and providing their feedback on ways to improve it. Such feedback led to refinements that would typically spring from a traditional piloting phase, and it ensured that the questionnaire was well-structured and consistent with the study's objectives. As a result, conducting a separate piloting phase with additional participants was considered redundant.

3.1.5 Data Collection Procedures

As previously established, the data collection process involved two instruments: proficiency tests and a semi-structured questionnaire. These tools were chosen for their suitability in gathering both quantitative and qualitative data needed to achieve the study's objectives.

The proficiency tests assessed learners' abilities in vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. A total of 30 learners participated in these tests, which were administered in a controlled classroom environment. The vocabulary and grammar tests were each allocated 30 minutes for completion, while the spelling test, consisting of 40 dictated words, required 10 minutes. All three tests were conducted within a single session to secure consistency in data collection as well as minimize the possibility of participant withdrawal.

The semi-structured questionnaire targeted EFL teachers to gain subjective views from experienced individuals and their perspectives on the challenges learners face in writing relevant to the study. Teachers were given the option to complete the questionnaire either electronically via email or in person. Upon completion, they could return it through the same mode in which they received it, or through whichever mode they preferred. Additionally, informed consent was obtained from all participants—both learners and teachers—before their involvement in the study, which was vital for making sure that ethical compliance and voluntary participation were fulfilled.

One noteworthy challenge during data collection was the teacher response rate. Although 10 teachers were invited to participate, only five have responded. Still, there is a possibility for this number to increase if teachers are given more time to respond, given how much workload they bear, and how encumbered their schedules are. Despite this limitation, the responses that were obtained still provide the needed perceptions intended to inform the quantitative data.

3.1.6 Data Analysis Procedures

The collected data will be analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to address the research objectives. The proficiency test scores will be analyzed using Excel, where the mean score for each aspect (vocabulary, grammar, and spelling) will be

calculated. These means will then be compared to determine the most challenging aspect of writing for learners, with the aspect with the lowest mean score being identified as the most common challenge. This analysis approach provides a very direct and clear answer to the main research question, as only few, if not one, interpretation can be made from the obtained results, which adds to the objectivity of the data.

On the other hand, the responses from the semi-structured questionnaire will be analyzed using thematic analysis. Teachers' perspectives will be systematically examined to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights related to the challenges learners face in writing. This qualitative approach will guarantee a comprehensive understanding of teachers' experiences and perceptions, which in turn informs and complements the quantitative findings from the proficiency tests. Such integration of statistical analysis along with thematic interpretation gives the study the potential to secure a holistic view of the difficulties learners come across in vocabulary, grammar, and spelling during writing.

3.1.7 Population/ Sample/ Sampling Technique

The target population for this study is EFL learners at Biskra University, more specifically, third year learners. The sample comprises 30 third year English language learners at Biskra University. Given the study's small scale, the convenience sampling method was utilized. Convenience sampling is a non-random sampling method in which participants are selected based on their availability and willingness to participate, instead of systematic or probabilistic processes. This approach is commonly used in research due to its practicality, as it allows for quick and cost-effective data collection. However, it may introduce bias since the sample may not be representative of the broader population (McLeod, 2022).

A third-year group under the instruction of the researcher's supervisor was selected to facilitate access to participants. This approach made efficient coordination and data collection within a controlled classroom environment much more attainable, which provided the needed intel about the writing challenges faced by this specific cohort of third year EFL learners.

3.2 Study Description and Rationale

In addition to the researcher's personal interest in writing, this research was prompted thanks to the observed behavior of peers towards the writing tasks laid before them. The vast majority tended to display a discernible lack of enthusiasm and appeared generally disengaged with these activities, but would still complete them out of necessity and obligation rather than genuine interest. With this in mind, the researcher wanted to understand why such dismay for writing took place, and believed that the most suitable way to approach this problem was through understanding where it stems from. Such can be done through the identification of the most troubling aspect among the previously established three aspects.

The significance of writing proficiency cannot be overstated. Developing this skill empowers learners to communicate their ideas effectively, boosts their academic performance, and prepares them for the demands of academia or the workplace, where clear and accurate writing is of high value and demand. Indeed, Graham and Perin (2007) write that the writing skill is not only indicative of academic success but also a basic qualification to take part in civic life and the global economy, putting even more stress on the importance of writing in personal and professional life.

While many studies have explored challenges in learning English among EFL learners, there is limited research focusing specifically on advanced university students and their difficulties with writing. Vocabulary, grammar, and spelling are each critical to writing

proficiency, but few studies thoroughly investigate how these factors individually impact third year learners' experiences. Additionally, existing research often adopts a holistic view of language skills rather than nuanced and specific. Therefore, concentrating on these particular aspects allows this study to fill a gap in understanding how third year EFL learners experience and perceive writing challenges, hence bringing to light new perspectives into the points for improvement in the current educational system.

It is important to mention that since vocabulary, grammar, and spelling are fundamentals in academic success for EFL learners, greater emphasis should be placed on them. Vocabulary knowledge underpins learners' ability to express ideas with precision, while grammatical competence ensures clarity and coherence in writing. Although spelling has sometimes been overlooked, it is an essential component for accurate and effective communication. This makes the writing process a complex, multifaceted one, and difficulties in any of these areas can diminish learners' confidence to such an extent that they withdraw from writing altogether.

The reason behind choosing the defined three aspects in particular is because they are commonly identified as being fundamental but problematic for EFL learners during writing. Other aspects of writing, such as content organization, stylistic choices, and various contexts of writing, are deliberately excluded in correspondence with the aim of this study, which is simply to point out the aspect of writing most difficult for learners in general.

Importantly, in this study, no specific type of writing is addressed. Vocabulary, grammar, and spelling are taken as integral components of any written communication and universally present across all forms of writing. They function as the core structural elements of all meaningful texts, so higher-order aspects of writing, such as coherence, cohesion, organization, argumentation, and stylistic refinement, are dependent upon the proper

development of these three foundational elements. For example, coherence and cohesion ensure logical flow between ideas, organization structures content effectively, argumentation supports critical reasoning, and stylistic refinement enhances clarity and engagement. Nevertheless, these aspects necessitate proficiency in vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. For this reason, the rationale for this study being limited to the three aspects is the fact that they are prerequisite skills for effective written expression, and without them, one cannot engage in any type of writing.

Therefore, the findings could guide educators in tailoring approaches to address the specific needs of EFL learners, instead of simply offering superficial solutions. In the end, this opens room for more efficient language instruction and encourages improved academic achievements among learners.

Conclusion

This chapter established the methodological framework of the study via outlining the research paradigm, approach, design, data collection procedures and analysis methods, and the sampling technique and study rationale. The proficiency tests, measuring learners' vocabulary, grammar, and spelling, were described as essential tools for identifying the most challenging aspect of writing. Additionally, the semi-structured questionnaire was discussed as a means of gathering teachers' perspectives and a means to ensuring a well-rounded understanding of the issue. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and participant confidentiality, were also addressed. The analysis procedures, combining statistical methods in Excel and thematic analysis, are sure to provide a much-desired comprehensive interpretation of the data. As such, this structured approach is mean to solidify the study's reliability and validity, ultimately paving the way for the presentation and discussion of results in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Fieldwork and Data Analysis

Introduction

4.1 The Results

4.1.1 Results of The Proficiency Tests

4.1.2 Results of The Semi-structured Questionnaire

4.2 Analysis and Interpretation

4.2.1 Analysis and Interpretation of The Proficiency Tests

4.2.1.1 Vocabulary Proficiency Test

4.2.1.1.1 Category 1: High Success Rate (60% and above)

4.2.1.1.2 Category 2: Moderate Success Rate (Between 40% and 60%)

4.2.1.1.3 Category 3: Low Success Rate (Below 40%)

4.2.1.2 Grammar Proficiency Test

4.2.1.2.1 Category 1: High Success Rate (60% and above)

4.2.1.2.2 Category 2: Moderate Success Rate (Between 40% and 60%)

4.2.1.2.3 Category 3: Low Success Rate (Below 40%)

4.2.1.3 Spelling Proficiency Test

4.2.1.3.1 Words with the Highest Success Rates (40% and above)

4.2.1.3.2 Words with Moderate Accuracy (Between 20% and 40%)

4.2.1.3.3 Words with Very Low Accuracy (Below 20%)

4.2.1.3.4 Words with the Lowest Success Rates (0% Correct)

4.2.1.3.5 The Role of Vocabulary Knowledge in Spelling Accuracy

4.2.2 Analysis and Interpretation of The Semi-structured Questionnaire

4.3 Synthesis of the Findings

Conclusion

Introduction

The present chapter presents the results of the study and addresses the research questions that guided the investigation into the primary challenges English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students face in writing, more specifically the established aspects of vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. Data were collected through two complementary data collection methods: proficiency tests administered to students, and a semi-structured questionnaire directed to EFL teachers. Quantitative data were organized, described and visualized using Excel, while qualitative data were thematically analyzed and manually coded, with the aim of providing an elaborate and balanced view of the areas where students struggle most, how these struggles manifest, and how teachers perceive and approach these challenges. The results are organized according to the nature of the data collected and are interpreted in light of existing pedagogical perspectives.

4.1 The Results

An understanding of the most commonly challenging aspect of writing students encounter was derived from the data collected through proficiency tests and a teacher questionnaire. The tests assessed vocabulary, grammar, and spelling skills among learners, with descriptive statistics used to compare performance across these areas. Meanwhile, teacher responses were thematically analyzed to identify patterns in their observations and perceptions. Together, the findings provide a clearer understanding of which linguistic component most affect students' writing proficiency.

4.1.1 Results of The Proficiency Tests

This section presents the results obtained from the three administered proficiency tests: vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. These tests were designed to measure third year

university students' linguistic proficiency in each area and to help identify which of the three components poses the greatest challenge when producing written texts.

The descriptive statistics of the three proficiency tests are summarized in **Table 1**. These include the minimum and maximum scores, the mean (average), which is out of 40, the standard deviation (SD), and the median for each test.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics for Vocabulary, Grammar, and Spelling Proficiency Tests (N = 30)*

Descriptive Statistic	Vocabulary	Grammar	Spelling
Mean	19.6	24.33	7.9
Minimum	8	11	0
Maximum	34	35	16
SD	6.29	6.56	4.7
Median	17.5	24	8

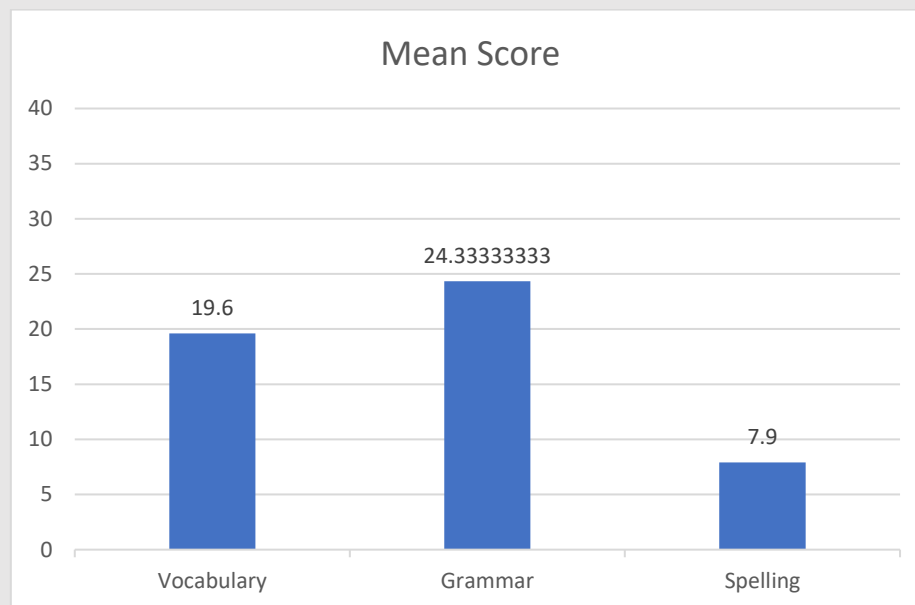
A close examination of **Table 1** reveals a clear performance hierarchy among the three language domains:

- The grammar test yielded the highest mean score (M= 24.33 out of 40), which suggests that most students have internalized the fundamental grammatical rules of English to a functional degree. The relatively high median (24.00), and moderate standard deviation (SD = 6.56) also suggest a balanced distribution, with a concentration of scores around the mid-to-high range. This reflects a generally consistent level of performance across the sample.

- The vocabulary test recorded a moderate mean score ($M = 19.60$ out of 40), which is notably lower than that of the grammar test. The minimum score (eight) and maximum score (34) reflect a wider performance gap which implies that vocabulary knowledge is less evenly distributed among students. The standard deviation ($SD = 6.29$) supports this even further, as it indicates a more varied level of lexical competence.
- The spelling test demonstrated the lowest average score by a significant margin, with a mean of $M = 7.90$ out of 40. The minimum score of 0 only displays the severity of difficulty some students experienced, and the highest score attained was only 16 out of 40, which supports the view that even the most proficient students in the sample struggled with spelling. The relatively low standard deviation ($SD = 4.70$), despite the poor overall scores, indicates that weak performance was consistent across the group.

This discrepancy in performance levels across the three skill areas provides a strong initial indication that spelling is the most problematic domain for this sample, followed by vocabulary, while grammar appears to be the most manageable. These statistical patterns are further illustrated in the graphs that follow.

To visualize the contrast in performance, **Figure 3** presents a bar graph comparing the mean scores of the vocabulary, grammar, and spelling tests.

Figure 3. *Mean Scores of Vocabulary, Grammar, and Spelling Tests*

As shown in **Figure 3**, the disparity in mean scores is both visually and numerically pronounced. The grammar bar towers above the others, which emphasizes its relative strength among students. Vocabulary occupies a middle ground, while spelling is significantly lower, establishing itself as the most acute area of linguistic weakness.

To enhance transparency and support the validity of these summaries, **Table 2** presents the raw scores of all participants across the three tests.

Table 2. *Individual Student Scores in the Vocabulary, Grammar, and Spelling Tests*

Vocabulary ID	Vocabulary Score	Grammar ID	Grammar Score	Spelling ID	Spelling Score
V1	27	G1	31	S1	9
V2	17	G2	22	S2	6
V3	8	G3	33	S3	0
V4	16	G4	22	S4	2
V5	21	G5	24	S5	2
V6	24	G6	15	S6	13
V7	31	G7	19	S7	9
V8	14	G8	23	S8	8
V9	15	G9	29	S9	16
V10	17	G10	30	S10	15
V11	17	G11	32	S11	14
V12	24	G12	11	S12	14
V13	19	G13	19	S13	3
V14	20	G14	31	S14	8
V15	12	G15	26	S15	7
V16	17	G16	15	S16	6
V17	33	G17	24	S17	16
V18	18	G18	16	S18	9
V19	17	G19	28	S19	10
V20	22	G20	29	S20	7
V21	15	G21	35	S21	6

V22	18	G22	34	S22	5
V23	17	G23	18	S23	11
V24	27	G24	18	S24	3
V25	24	G25	28	S25	9
V26	11	G26	26	S26	14
V27	14	G27	30	S27	4
V28	16	G28	24	S28	0
V29	23	G29	14	S29	8
V30	34	G30	24	S30	3

Note. This table presents the individual raw scores obtained by all participants in the grammar, vocabulary, and spelling proficiency tests. Each student completed all three tests anonymously. Therefore, student identifiers (G1–G30, V1–V30, and S1–S30) are unique to each test and do not correspond across the three columns. All tests were scored out of 40. This table is provided to illustrate the distribution of individual performances and support the computation of descriptive statistics summarized in **Table 1**.

The raw data in **Table 2** reflects considerable variation in individual scores, particularly in vocabulary and spelling. The repeated occurrence of low spelling scores—many in the 0–5 range—demonstrates that this aspect of language production is the most consistently problematic among the group.

In addition to the summary statistics, individual performance patterns are examined through three line graphs, with each one displaying the score distribution for the 30 students in each test.

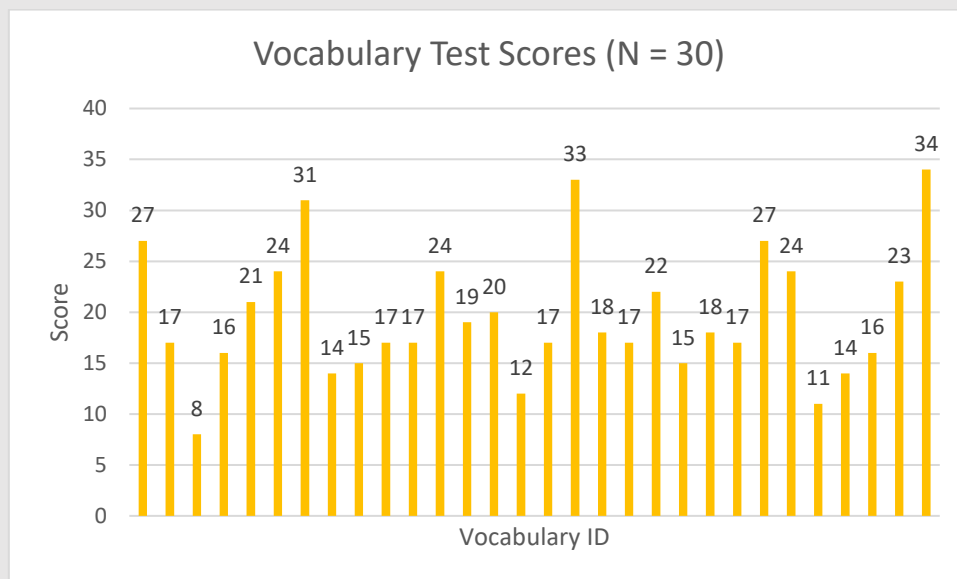
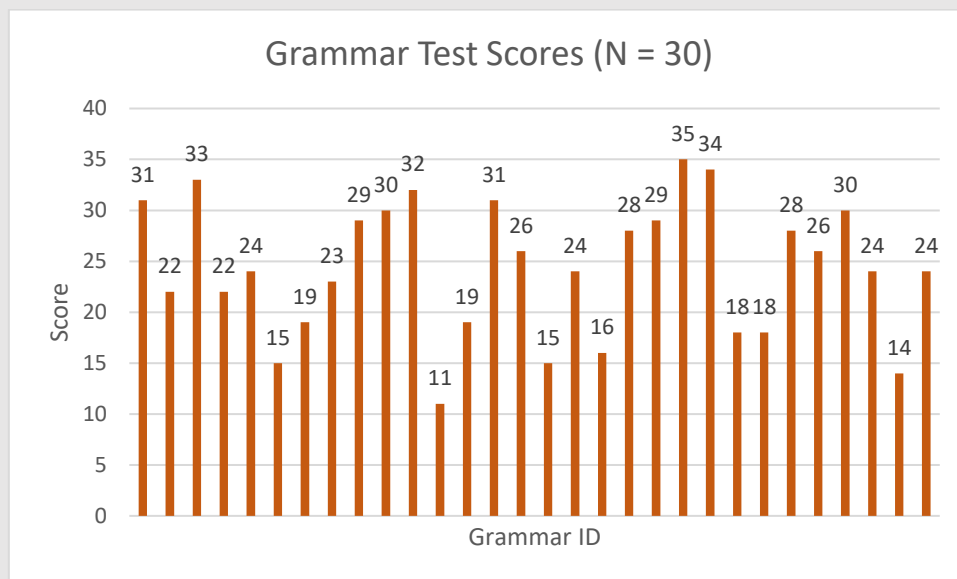
Figure 4. *Individual Scores of Students in the Vocabulary Test*

Figure 4 reveals a more dispersed pattern. Vocabulary scores fluctuate more widely, ranging from 8 to 34, with visible drops and rises. This variability indicates that lexical knowledge varies considerably, which may reflect differences in individual reading habits, exposure to English, or memory strategies.

Figure 5. *Individual Scores of Students in the Grammar Test*

In **Figure 5**, grammar scores are spread from a low of 11 to a high of 35, with most scores clustering in the 20–30 range. This suggests a relatively strong performance across the sample and reinforces the idea that grammatical competence is more uniformly distributed among students.

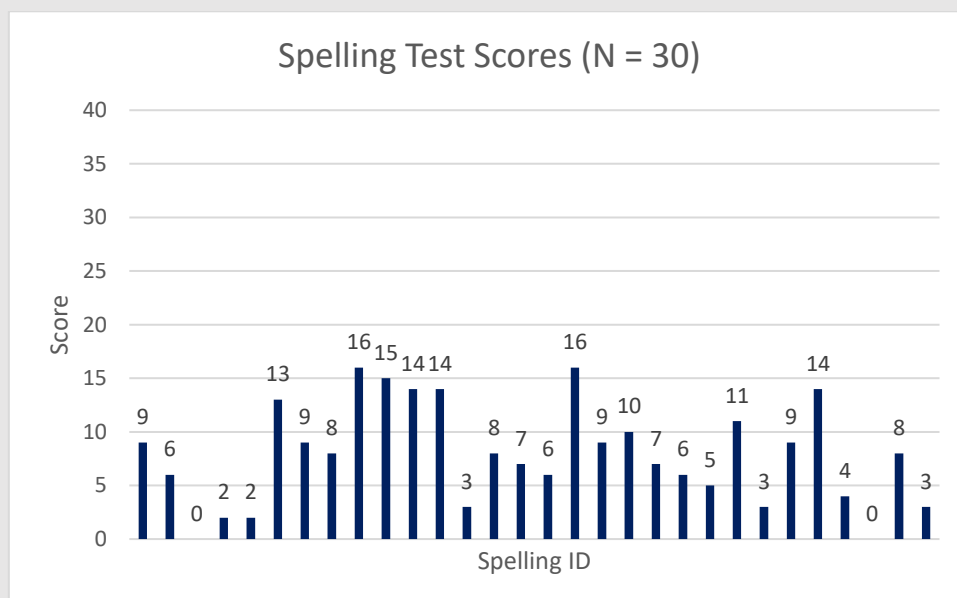
Figure 6. *Individual Scores of Students in the Spelling Test*

Figure 6 portrays a steep decline in scores, with many students scoring below 10 and several clustered around the 0–5 range. There is no clear peak in performance, and no student

exceeded 16/40. This reflects a collective struggle with spelling across the entire cohort and suggests that the issue is not individual but systemic.

These graphical patterns corroborate the numerical findings in addition to providing much needed insights into distributional trends. While grammar exhibits a normal-like distribution, vocabulary is more scattered, and spelling is compressed at the lower end, which reveals a shared deficiency.

Therefore, the marked difference in mean scores and score distributions holds important implications for language instruction:

- The strong performance in grammar may be a result of traditional form-based teaching approaches that prioritize grammatical rules and structures through repeated drills and explicit instruction. It could also be due to the fact that grammar has been explicitly taught since the first year of middle school, consuming the majority of the program at the expense of other language skill.
- Vocabulary's middling performance suggests that students are exposed to lexical input, but may still lack depth of knowledge, especially in terms of usage, nuance, and collocation.
- Spelling, by contrast, emerges as an overlooked and underdeveloped skill, likely due to a combination of English's unpredictable orthography, minimal print exposure, low frequency of written output in English, and the auditory nature of the test, which exposes weaknesses in listening and phonological awareness. Still, dictation is the most appropriate mean of testing spelling proficiency simply because of its fundamental nature, which is accurately reproducing spoken language in written form. It is worth noting that the underperformance in spelling may also be attributed to students' unfamiliarity with some of the dictated words.

In this sense, limited vocabulary knowledge could have influenced their spelling accuracy, as correct spelling typically presupposes recognition and understanding of the word itself. Such correlation will be further explored in one of the coming sections.

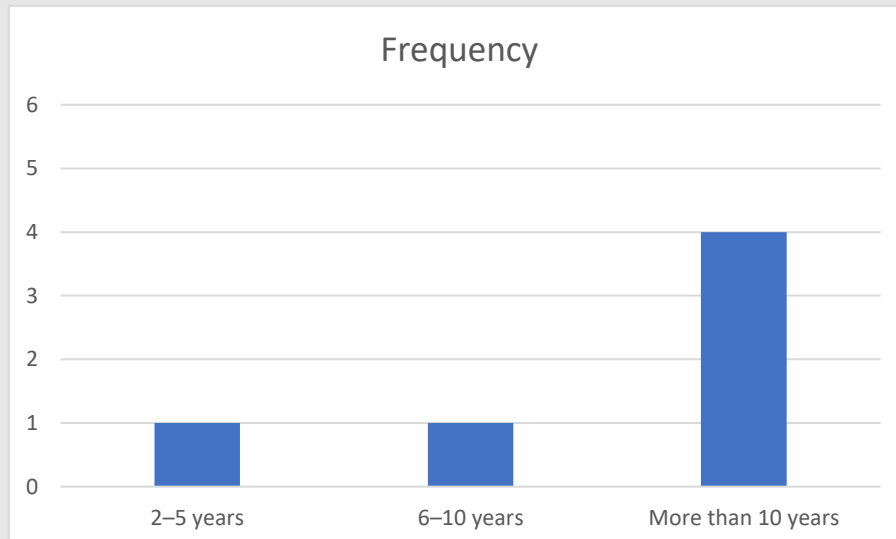
4.1.2 Results of The Semi-structured Questionnaire

This questionnaire was administered online to teachers via email, where they were offered the choice to be handed hard copies of the questionnaire along with a consent letter, or digitally fill them in and email them back to the researcher. Those who asked for hard copies were handed such at a time they have selected to ensure alignment with their busy schedules, and later on collected in the same manner. Although 10 teachers were contacted, only six did respond, which evidently takes a toll on the results of the questionnaire, but due to the very small time window, these responses had to suffice. Nevertheless, the researcher believes that the obtained responses still yield very valuable insights about the issue at hand and still successfully support the quantitative data. The following results display a summary of teacher responses to each questionnaire item.

Section one: Background Information

- **Question 1: Teaching Experience in EFL**

Figure 7. *Distribution of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teaching Experience.*



This chart highlights that the majority of respondents (66.7%) have over a decade of EFL teaching experience, indicating a sample with substantial professional expertise.

- **Question 2: Experience Teaching Third-Year EFL Students at Biskra University**

- **Yes:** Five teachers (83.3%)
- **No:** One teacher (16.7%)

The high percentage of “Yes” responses indicates that most participants have direct, relevant experience with the target student group. It can be argued that the questionnaire should have been administered to teachers that have had experience teaching third year students exclusively. However, this would have limited the response rate even more, granting even less perspectives than the already few ones. Hence, opening the opportunity for teachers who have not taught the target level was deemed a suitable way to work around the aforementioned potential issue, with the only mandatory criterion of having experience correcting students’ written productions.

- **Question 3: Current Teaching Position**

- **Full-time:** 6 teachers (100%)
- **Part-time/Other:** 0 teachers (0%)

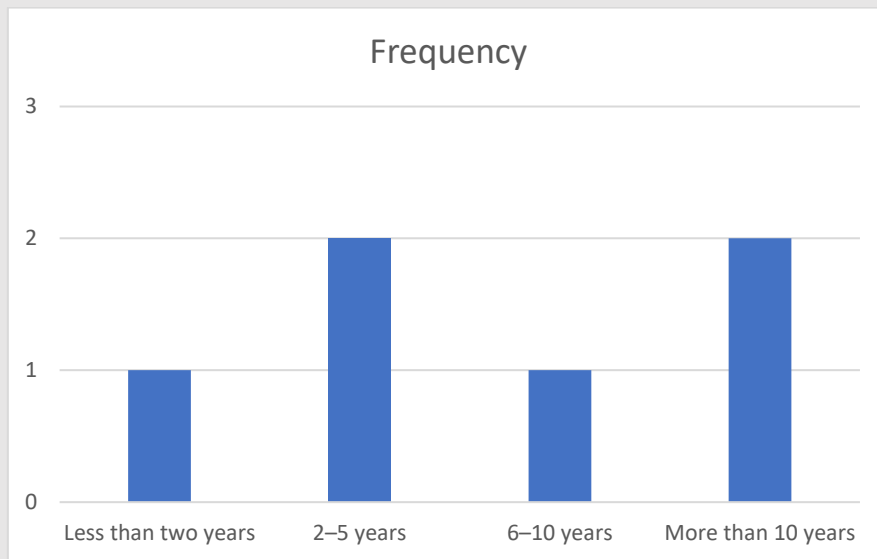
All respondents hold full-time positions, which underscores their professional investment and likely availability for sustained pedagogical practice.

- **Question 4: Experience Teaching Writing-Related Modules**

Table 3. *Frequency of Teachers' Years of Experience in Teaching Writing-Related Modules*

Years of Experience Teaching Writing Modules	Frequency	Percentage
Less than two years	1	16.70%
2–5 years	2	33.30%
6–10 years	1	16.70%
More than 10 years	2	33.30%
Total	6	100%

Table 3 presents the distribution of teachers based on their years of experience teaching writing-related modules. As shown, the largest groups were those with 2–5 years and more than 10 years of experience (33.3% each). One participant had less than two years of experience, and another had between 6–10 years of experience. This diversity in experience levels enriches the dataset because it captures perspectives from both novice and veteran writing instructors.

Figure 8. *Participants' Years of Experience Teaching Writing Modules.*

In general, the demographic information indicates that the participants were predominantly experienced EFL instructors who had considerable exposure to university-level teaching and writing instruction, making their perspectives highly relevant to the present study.

Section two: Perceptions of Writing Challenges

- **Question 5: Perceived Importance of Vocabulary, Grammar, and Spelling**

All six teachers unanimously selected “All three are equally important”. In their open-ended justifications, they emphasized that writing proficiency emerges only when “form” (grammar and spelling) and “content” (vocabulary) are balanced. For example, T1 noted that “Relevant vocabulary and correct grammar and spelling are vital elements when writing. They constitute the form. The content of any piece of writing cannot be effective if the form is not”. T4 similarly argued that over-emphasizing any one component creates a long-term “severe disturbance in that linguistic balance”, which evidently showcases the holistic nature of writing instruction.

- **Question 6: Aspect That Students Struggle with Most**

- **All three aspects concurrently:** 3 of 6 teachers (50%)
- **Vocabulary only:** 2 of 6 teachers (33.3%)
- **Grammar only:** 1 of 6 teachers (16.7%)

Teachers who selected “all three” pointed to a constellation of deficits—students lack the vocabulary to express complex ideas, make frequent grammatical errors that disrupt meaning, and struggle with accurate spelling. T6 summarized: “They do not master grammar rules, they do not know a lot of vocabulary... it’s all due to both lack of knowledge and practice”. Those focusing on vocabulary attributed this to limited reading habits and insufficient lexical exposure, while the single grammar selection highlighted the cognitive load of applying complex rule systems in real time.

- **Question 7: Impact of These Challenges on Writing Performance**

Every teacher judged the effect of vocabulary, grammar, and spelling difficulties on overall writing as “Very significantly”. Common rationales included:

- **Obscured meaning:** Grammatical mistakes render texts as ambiguous.
- **Undermined clarity:** Spelling and form errors distract readers from core ideas.
- **Exacerbated deficiencies:** Reliance on non-authentic input materials further entrenches errors.

- **Question 8: Primary Causes of Writing Challenges**

Respondents were asked to select all that apply; percentages reflect teachers endorsing each cause.

- **Lack of practice:** 6 of 6 (100%)

Other causes noted:

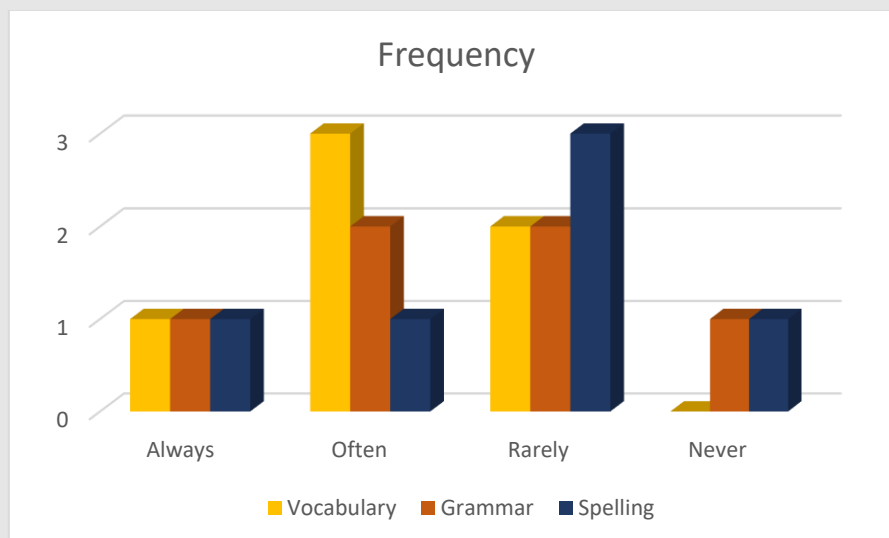
- **Insufficient reading exposure:** 2 of 6 (33.3%)
- **Reliance on informal digital media:** 1 of 6 (16.7%)
- **Curriculum/evaluation misalignment:** 1 of 6 (16.7%)

All teachers pointed first to insufficient writing practice, meaning students simply do not write enough to internalize correct forms. Some teachers noted other causes; T3 flagged the “the negative influence of chatting with symbolic contractions in social media”, while T6 identified three main causes of students’ writing difficulties: insufficient writing practice, ineffective instructional and assessment methods, and systemic issues such as overcrowded classrooms. T6 emphasized that large class sizes limit individualized feedback, while global evaluation approaches fail to help students recognize and correct their errors. Additionally, the current syllabus demands skills students have yet to developed, only compounding the challenge.

Section three: Teaching Practices and Curriculum

- **Question 9: Frequency of Explicit Instruction**

Figure 9. *Frequency of Explicit Teaching of Each Aspect*



Vocabulary and grammar receive more consistent attention, with over two thirds of teachers indicating they teach these “always” or “often”. By contrast, only one teacher “always” covers spelling, one teacher “never” does, and half report they do so “rarely”, which reveals a clear instructional gap in orthographic practice. This makes perfect sense considering what the quantitative data has revealed, and makes an important call for the necessity of incorporating orthographic instruction.

- **Question 10: Curriculum Support for Vocabulary, Grammar, and Spelling**

All six teachers rated the current curriculum’s support for these writing components as “Moderately well”. Common justifications included:

- **Early coverage but later neglect:** Foundational form instruction in lower levels is not reinforced at the third year stage.
- **Need for guided practice:** Limited class time dedicated to supervised writing exercises.
- **Process-focused syllabus:** Emphasis on writing as a process rather than on explicit form drills.

- **Question 11: Effective Teaching Strategies**

Teachers employ a variety of approaches to strengthen each component:

- **Vocabulary:** Extensive reading programs, student-generated glossaries, modeling of well-written texts, and genre-based tasks.
- **Grammar:** In-class guided writing exercises, storytelling activities that highlight grammatical structures, and deductive lessons using authentic texts.
- **Spelling:** Dictation activities, visual modeling of word patterns, repeated writing tasks, and genre/process approaches that integrate spelling into extended writing.

Section four: Recommendations and Insights

- **Question 12: Recommendations for Improvement**

Teachers' key suggestions were:

- Parallel instruction of vocabulary, grammar, and spelling within writing courses.
- Increased reading and writing tasks without reliance on technology.
- Workshops and tutorials focused on form and language proficiency.
- Smaller class sizes and individualized feedback to allow for detailed error correction.

- **Question 13: Additional Insights**

Some teachers offered the following observations:

- Proofreading instruction.
- Formal vs. informal language clashes caused by social media.
- Cohesion and coherence challenges beyond form.
- Teacher responsibility and collaboration in diagnosing and addressing writing issues.

4.2 Analysis and Interpretation

4.2.1 Analysis and Interpretation of The Proficiency Tests

In order to better interpret the data collected from all three proficiency tests, the 40 test items were grouped into three distinct performance-based categories:

- **High Success:** Questions with a correct response rate above 60%
- **Moderate Success:** Questions with a correct response rate between 40% and 60%
- **Low Success:** Questions with a correct response rate below 40%

Grouping items this way allowed for pattern recognition across the data, namely in terms of lexical complexity, familiarity, and contextual usage.

The categorization is informed by both linguistic principles and pedagogical realities. Vocabulary acquisition, for example, is cumulative and often times context-dependent, as it “extends over time through repeated encounters and specific attention to target words” (Aguilar García, 2024). To put it in other terms, words that are more frequently used in classroom instruction, daily communication, and textbook materials tend to be more easily retained. On the other end of the spectrum, idiomatic phrases, phrasal verbs, and collocations that do not translate directly or literally commonly present additional cognitive challenges for students. This is especially relevant considering the students' linguistic background: they began studying English in the first year of middle school, whereas French was introduced earlier, at the third year of primary school. As such, their exposure to English vocabulary is more recent and likely more formalized, confined largely to academic settings.

The following interpretations draw on this context to make sense of student performance in each category.

4.2.1.1 Vocabulary Proficiency Test

4.2.1.1.1 Category 1: High Success Rate (60% and above)

- **Question 1:** “tired → exhausted, small → tiny, angry → _____”
- **Correct answer:** furious
- **Success rate:** 63.3%

Students showed a solid grasp of intensifiers and synonyms here. This item tested knowledge of high-frequency emotional adjectives. “Furious” is a common enough word in

media and classroom materials, which is regularly used alongside “angry”, making it more likely students had encountered and remembered it.

- **Question 4:** “What time do you go to _____ every day?”
- **Correct answer:** work
- **Success rate:** 66.63%

This is a basic daily routine phrase, likely introduced early in English instruction. The familiarity with this structure shows that students are comfortable with vocabulary tied to everyday activities—possibly reinforced through repeated textbook and classroom use.

- **Question 6** “What time is it? It’s 6.15 – a _____ past six.”
- **Correct answer:** quarter
- **Success rate:** 73.3%

Telling time is repeatedly stressed upon in early English lessons. “Quarter past” is a very common expression, and this high success rate reflects its inclusion in classroom drills and listening practice.

- **Question 9:** “Your father’s brother’s daughter is your _____.”
- **Correct answer:** cousin
- **Success rate:** 69.97%

Though technically in the “high” group, the sentence structure is somewhat complex. Students still performed quite well, likely because family vocabulary is well taught, though multi-step family trees can introduce confusion.

- **Question 12:** “Argh! This noise is giving me a _____.”
- **Correct answer:** headache
- **Success rate:** 69.97%

A “headache” is a familiar and literal vocabulary item that students likely encounter both in health contexts and conversational English. The emotional cue “Argh!” made the sentence highly comprehensible.

- **Question 16:** “Our teacher doesn’t _____ us use mobile phones in class.”
- **Correct answer:** let
- **Success rate:** 63.3%

This sentence reflects a real classroom rule, and the verb “let” may be more intuitive for students due to its frequent use in school-related discipline language. The structure “let + object + verb” is sometimes tricky grammatically, but clearly the vocabulary itself was accessible.

- **Question 17:** “friendly → unfriendly, honest → dishonest, polite → _____”
- **Correct answer:** impolite
- **Success rate:** 66.63%

This vocabulary pattern uses prefixes to form antonyms, which is a skill students typically practice with lists. The success rate suggests students are comfortable with the structure and have likely memorized this set of opposites, especially that they were taught suffixes and prefixes explicitly during pre-university levels.

- **Question 23:** “Excuse me, I think you’ve _____ a mistake in our bill.”
- **Correct answer:** made
- **Success rate:** 79.97%

“Make a mistake” is a collocation that is almost always taught explicitly. Students seem to have memorized this chunk as a fixed phrase, and in turn, it contributed to the high accuracy.

- **Question 25:** “Do you live in a house or _____?”
- **Correct answer:** an apartment
- **Success rate:** 86.63%

This very high success rate shows how well students know basic housing vocabulary. It is possible the contrast between “house” and “apartment” is taught early, or that they see this vocabulary often in real-life contexts (media, games, textbooks). It can also be due to the fact that “apartment” is the same in French and is often used in our dialect (Algerian), which borrows vocabulary from French. This overlap likely made the word more familiar and accessible to students.

- **Question 28:** “What size do you need: small, medium or _____?”
- **Correct answer:** large
- **Success rate:** 86.63%

This high success rate suggests that students are quite familiar with standard sizing vocabulary, likely due to its frequent use in everyday contexts like clothing stores and English learning materials. The familiarity and predictability of the options likely made this an accessible and straightforward question.

- **Question 34:** “He studies maths at university. He’s a _____.”
- **Correct answer:** student
- **Success rate:** 86.63%

This is among the highest success rates, and for good reason. The word “student” is central to students’ identities, and is one of the first they learn in English. This considerably high result confirms its universality.

- **Question 36:** “‘Happy’ is the _____ of ‘sad’.”
- **Correct answer:** opposite
- **Success rate:** 100%

This question had a perfect success rate, which strongly indicates that students were very familiar with the concept being tested. The “identifying opposites” task is a standard vocabulary skill that has been routinely reinforced throughout students’ pre-university education. In fact, English exams and tests during their school years consistently included questions requiring them to find the opposite of a word from the given text. This regular exposure has clearly contributed to their confidence and automaticity with this type of vocabulary task.

Moreover, the vocabulary in this item was both basic and highly familiar, which makes it even more accessible. The question serves as a good example of how repeated and structured practice in school assessments can lead to long-term retention and success in specific linguistic areas.

- **Question 37:** “‘imagine → imaginative, rely → reliable, ambition → _____”
- **Correct answer:** ambitious
- **Success rate:** 76.63%

This strong performance suggests that most students are comfortable with word formation, namely with adjective derivations from nouns or verbs. The presence of a consistent morphological pattern (-ive, -able, -ous) across the examples likely helped guide them to the correct choice. It also shows a solid grasp of common suffixes, especially in academic or personal qualities, which are frequent in school contexts.

- **Question 39:** “The weather was great – it was really _____.”
- **Correct answer:** sunny

- **Success rate:** 86.63%

The very high success rate indicates that this type of vocabulary, common adjectives used to describe the weather, is well known to the students. “Sunny” is a frequent word in early English instruction and regularly encountered in beginner-level texts, songs, and classroom discussions. The context of the sentence also made the correct choice quite clear, which further minimized confusion with distractor options.

- **Question 40:** “Her hair isn’t completely straight – it’s slightly _____.”
- **Correct answer:** wavy
- **Success rate:** 73.3%

Though slightly more descriptive, this vocabulary word may appear in fashion or appearance units. The clue “isn’t completely straight” makes the answer easier to infer, which also goes to show good comprehension skills.

- ***Overall Takeaway***

Students performed well on vocabulary items related to daily routines, common adjectives, family terms, and familiar collocations. Their accuracy on these items points to strong retention of frequently taught and practiced lexical chunks, likely reinforced through repetitive exposure in classrooms, textbooks, and media. Key strengths included:

- Recognizing intensifiers and opposites (e.g., furious, impolite, opposite)
- Understanding routine expressions (e.g., go to work, make a mistake)
- Familiarity with school-related language (e.g., student, let us use...)
- Confident use of common descriptive adjectives (e.g., sunny, wavy)
- Accurate word formation from base forms (e.g., ambitious from ambition)

The consistently high performance on these items suggests that students have a solid foundation in core vocabulary, especially those connected to their own lives or taught through patterned input. Continued success can be supported by spiraled revision, theme-based learning, and incidental vocabulary exposure to deepen and broaden their lexical range.

4.2.1.1.2 Category 2: Moderate Success Rate (Between 40% and 60%)

These questions had mixed results. The vocabulary is somewhat familiar, but the phrasing or context may have introduced difficulties. These items highlight partial understanding or guessing.

- **Question 7:** “I don’t _____ going out tonight.”
- **Correct answer:** feel like
- **Success rate:** 56.63%

“Feel like” is a phrase tied to expressing desire or mood, but the informal structure may confuse students who expect more literal verbs. Still, over half the sample answered correctly, which displays moderate familiarity.

- **Question 8:** “She doesn’t have brothers or sisters – she’s _____.”
- **Correct answer:** an only child
- **Success rate:** 46.63%

This phrase may be less common in instruction. While the meaning is clear in context, “only child” as a term may not be directly translated in their native language or heavily emphasized in class. Furthermore, two of the other available options, which are “a single child” and “a lonely child” might have seemed correct to students who have not encountered such collocation as “an only child” before.

- **Question 10:** “At the weekend I _____ with some friends – we went for a curry, then had a couple of drinks.”
- **Correct answer:** went out
- **Success rate:** 49.97%

This phrasal verb is relatively common in conversational English, and the clue provided by the full sentence context (“went for a curry, then had a couple of drinks”) likely helped many students infer its meaning. The verb “go out” is also used in different senses (e.g., socializing vs. to stop functioning), which may contribute to confusion. Nevertheless, the nearly 50% success rate shows a decent level of familiarity and suggests that students have had moderate exposure, likely from textbooks, dialogue listening activities, or TV shows, even if it is not yet a fully mastered lexical item.

- **Question 18:** “I’m a bit lost. Can you tell me how to _____ to the university?”
- **Correct answer:** get
- **Success rate:** 43.3%

“Get to” is part of travel vocabulary, but can be confusing since it is a phrasal verb. Students’ unfamiliarity with said phrasal verb might be the reason for choosing one of the options they were more familiar with, namely the option “go”.

- **Question 19:** “Breakfast, lunch and dinner are _____.”
- **Correct answer:** meals
- **Success rate:** 43.3%

This seems straightforward, but “meals” may not be a high-frequency word if emphasis is placed on the individual meal names. The grouping concept may be less familiar or less emphasized in instruction. Unless it is sought out outside the classroom, this vocabulary item is not usually encountered in their study context.

- **Question 20:** “Every time I wear something white, I _____ coffee or orange juice on it.”
- **Correct answer:** spill
- **Success rate:** 56.63%

This tests real-life vocabulary. While the action is clear, the verb “spill” may be under-practiced. Still, over half answered correctly, possibly aided by the realistic and relatable imagery, as well as the distraction caused by other options such as “drop”.

- **Question 21:** “It’s a good idea, but it’s _____ that the boss will agree with you.”
- **Correct answer:** unlikely
- **Success rate:** 49.97%

This question evaluates students’ understanding of adjectives that express degrees of probability. Despite “unlikely” being the correct and commonly used adjective in this context, nearly half the students selected incorrect alternatives such as “unprobably” or “improbably”. These words, while morphologically similar, are either nonstandard (unprobably is not a correct English word) or extremely rare (improbably is technically correct but awkward in this sentence). Their presence among the options likely caused confusion due to superficial resemblance to “unlikely”. This suggests that students may sometimes rely on form over function, as they select words that look grammatically correct without fully grasping their usage. It also points to a possible gap in familiarity with natural-sounding expressions of probability in English, something that could be strengthened with more exposure to everyday usage patterns.

- **Question 24:** “He’s so _____ ! I’m not _____ in anything he says.”
- **Correct answer:** boring ... interested
- **Success rate:** 56.63%

Students often confused “bored” and “boring”, so this sentence required understanding of both their nuanced meanings. The emotional contrast in the sentence likely helped push the success rate just over the halfway mark.

- **Question 27:** “I love all fruit, but _____ strawberries.”
- **Correct answer:** especially
- **Success rate:** 43.3%

This item tests knowledge of adverbial intensifiers used for emphasis or to show preference. The word “especially” is common in both spoken and written English, but may still pose challenges for students who confuse it with similar words like “specially” or “specifically”, which were among the options available to choose from. With a score just over 43%, students appear somewhat familiar, but not fully confident. It is possible that instruction has focused more on high-frequency everyday vocabulary, while these more nuanced modifiers receive less direct attention, making them trickier in gap-fill contexts that demand precision, and provide multiple seemingly fitting options.

- ***Overall Takeaway***

While students displayed moderate competence with familiar expressions and real-life contexts, challenges emerged in areas involving:

- Phrasal and verb-preposition combinations
- Fixed collocations and idioms
- Abstract or discourse-level modifiers
- Morphological traps and false friends

Students' results in this category indicate that students would benefit from increased exposure to natural spoken English, more focus on lexical chunks, and targeted practice with commonly confused terms, namely those not easily deduced from form alone.

4.2.1.1.3 Category 3: Low Success Rate (Below 40%)

These questions presented significant challenges, and may reflect less exposure, more advanced vocabulary, tricky collocations, or unfamiliar contexts. They highlight the areas where students need more focused support.

- **Question 2:** "They never argue and enjoy spending time together = They _____."
- **Correct answer:** get on very well
- **Success rate:** 39.97%

This idiomatic expression may be under-taught or not emphasized in listening exercises. "Get on" is informal and may not appear in standard grammar-focused instruction, explaining the struggle. Additionally, the use of English outside the classroom in casual social settings and communication is rather difficult to attain since it is not a medium of communication for the average person.

- **Question 3:** "We nearly missed the plane – we were only just _____."
- **Correct answer:** in time
- **Success rate:** 36.63%

Though "in time" is a useful expression, it contrasts with "on time," which students may know better, and most of them have selected over the correct one. The nuance is subtle, and students may confuse or mix up the two.

- **Question 5:** "She's a police officer, so she has to wear a _____ at work."
- **Correct answer:** uniform

- **Success rate:** 26.63%

Despite the straightforward nature of the question, student performance was quite low. A major reason appears to be the popularity of the distractor “police suit”, which many chose over the correct answer. This displays a misunderstanding of standard terminology, possibly influenced by literal translation or unfamiliarity with job-specific vocabulary. Even though “police suit” may seem logically correct to students unfamiliar with the collocation “wear a uniform”, it is not a term typically used in English. This puts forward a need for greater emphasis on learning natural collocations and commonly used phrases in professional contexts.

- **Question 11:** “I _____ swimming every Saturday morning.”
- **Correct answer:** go
- **Success rate:** 36.63%

Despite being a common collocation (“go swimming”), students struggled. This could point to challenges with collocations or verb-noun combinations. The routine context did not aid many students here.

- **Question 13:** “Do you want a _____ or a return ticket?”
- **Correct answer:** single
- **Success rate:** 19.97%

The low performance on this question likely reflects unfamiliarity with British travel vocabulary. The correct term “single” may not be commonly used or taught in some students’ learning contexts, especially if they are more exposed to American English or direct translations from their native language. Many students selected the distractor “one journey”, which, while semantically logical, is not a conventional phrase used in English-speaking

countries to refer to a ticket. This denotes a need to reinforce set travel-related vocabulary and expressions.

- **Question 14:** “Fruit and vegetables are healthy = Fruit and vegetables are ____.”
- **Correct answer:** good for you
- **Success rate:** 13.3%

Although it is a common phrase in natural English, the expression “good for you” is idiomatic and may not translate directly into students’ native languages. The majority of students chose alternatives like “good for health” or “healthsome”, which are either grammatically awkward or unnatural in standard English. This indicates that even if students grasped the intended meaning, they lacked familiarity with the target collocation, which is ordinarily acquired through exposure rather than rule-based instruction.

- **Question 15:** “apartment → flat, elevator → lift, gasoline → ____”
- **Correct answer:** petrol
- **Success rate:** 16.63%

This is another item that relied on recognizing British English equivalents, which may not have been explicitly taught. Many students have defaulted to “fuel”, a more general and familiar term, instead of the specific British counterpart “petrol”. This demonstrates limited exposure to British variants in addition to a tendency to choose broader or more neutral vocabulary when unsure.

- **Question 22:** “We’re planning to go ____ for the weekend.”
- **Correct answer:** away
- **Success rate:** 16.63%

This low success rate shows confusion around subtle nuances in meaning. Most students selected “out”, which is widely associated with short, casual outings like going to a restaurant or event. Nevertheless, the use of the verb “planning” in this context implies a trip that requires more forethought and preparation, something more substantial than simply going out. “Away” fits better semantically because it connotes travel or temporary relocation, usually for rest or leisure, which lines up more naturally with the idea of a weekend getaway. The misunderstanding may reflect a lack of exposure to such collocational nuances in everyday classroom instruction.

- **Question 26:** “I’ve got all the data. Now I just need to _____ the answer.”
- **Correct answer:** work out
- **Success rate:** 19.97%

Based in this success rate, students struggled to recognize the correct phrasal verb. Distracting alternatives like “count out” may have seemed plausible, especially if students were unfamiliar with the idiomatic use of “work out” in problem-solving contexts.

- **Question 29:** “He’s a waiter; she’s a _____.”
- **Correct answer:** waitress
- **Success rate:** 39.97%

Despite seeming obvious, gendered job titles can confuse students, especially in contexts where “waitress” may be outdated or avoided. Most students selected a misspelled version of the correct answer (“waiterress”), or thought “waiter” is a gender-neutral title and selected it.

- **Question 30:** “Let’s go to a restaurant for dinner tonight = Let’s _____ tonight.”
- **Correct answer:** eat out
- **Success rate:** 29.97%

The low success rate may be due to confusion with similar expressions, as many students chose “eat outside”, which is more literal and contextually different and was likely literally translated from their mother tongue (Arabic). This implies limited familiarity with the idiomatic meaning of “eat out” as going to a restaurant.

- **Question 31:** “I’ve been so busy all week. I don’t want to do anything at the weekend – I’ll just stay at home and _____.”
- **Correct answer:** take it easy
- **Success rate:** 29.97%

This idiom is relaxed and conversational. Without frequent listening exposure, students may not feel confident choosing this over more literal options such as “have a relax” and “make a rest”. Even though the previous two options are grammatically incorrect, students still chose them over “take it easy” because of their unfamiliarity with it.

- **Question 32:** “It’s the _____ building in the city.”
- **Correct answer:** tallest
- **Success rate:** 19.97%

Despite the fact that it is a basic and widely taught grammatical structure (superlative adjectives), this question had one of the lowest success rates. Most students chose “highest” or “greatest”, which are semantically inappropriate here, even if grammatically correct in other contexts. This pattern of incorrect choices suggests a reliance on literal or surface-level word recognition in place of contextual or collocational awareness.

The confusion likely stems from the misapplication of synonyms. Students may associate “high” and “great” with something being “large” or “impressive”, and fail to notice that in English, when describing the vertical physical dimension of buildings, the adjective “tall” is most natural. Their attraction to “highest” may also reflect interference from French, where

“le plus haut bâtiment” (literally, “the highest building”) is correct, which further supports the idea that cross-linguistic influence plays a role in their error.

In addition, “greatest”, while technically a superlative, refers more to abstract concepts like importance or achievement, not physical height. Its selection indicates a lack of semantic precision and limited exposure to natural descriptive usage. This question reveals that students are wrestling with the nuances of usage and collocation, specifically when similar words exist but apply differently depending on the context.

- **Question 33:** “You can’t smoke here – please _____ your cigarette.”
- **Correct answer:** put out
- **Success rate:** 26.63%

The low success rate on this item reflects limited familiarity with the phrasal verb “put out” in the sense of extinguishing a cigarette. Many students chose distractors like “put away” and “put down”, which are grammatically correct but semantically inappropriate in this context. This suggests confusion over the nuanced meanings of similar phrasal verbs. The phrasing of the sentence is quite natural in English, so the challenge seems to lie primarily in their unfamiliarity with this form, not to mention the presence of other plausible options.

- **Question 35:** “I don’t like my job very much. I’m going to _____ and look for another one.”
- **Correct answer:** resign
- **Success rate:** 39.97%

This vocabulary word may not appear until more advanced levels, or may not be distinguished clearly from “retire”, which most students chose instead.

- **Question 38:** “If I were you, I’d leave earlier, so you can avoid the _____.”
- **Correct answer:** rush hour
- **Success rate:** 39.97%

Many students selected other plausible options such as “peak hour”, “traffic time”, and “peak time”. Even though these alternatives may seem logical, “rush hour” is the commonly accepted and idiomatic term in English. The confusion shows that students may lack exposure to the exact collocation used natively.

- ***Overall Takeaway***

Based on this category, the most challenging vocabulary items revealed obvious gaps in students' collocational awareness, idiomatic understanding, and contextual interpretation. Specific issues included:

- Informal expressions and phrasal verbs unfamiliar from textbook instruction
- British English terms (e.g., single, petrol) not widely encountered
- Literal translations from the mother tongue affecting choice
- Spelling errors and morphological confusion on seemingly basic words

These patterns suggest a need for greater focus on authentic language use, especially through listening and reading materials rich in everyday speech. Teaching strategies should direct attention on natural input, contrastive practice, and recycling target expressions in context to help students internalize usage that is not easily inferred.

In this category, along with the previous one, it is deduced that idiomatic and formal language are not areas students fully grasp. Some may argue that informal, everyday vocabulary is rarely found or used in academic writing. However, it is important to remember, first, that this research does not exclusively address academic writing, but written

texts in general terms; and second, that reading and writing are closely interconnected. To fully understand and engage with what they read, students must be equipped with a broad range of language, both formal and idiomatic. Even within academic writing, a strong command of both formal and informal language is important. Although the tone of academic texts must remain formal, understanding idiomatic and everyday language enriches a writer's ability to interpret sources, engage with a wider range of materials, and express complex ideas more naturally. Exposure to all types of language deepens a writer's sensitivity to nuance and grants them the ability to write with greater precision, clarity, and authenticity, even within the formal demands of academic work.

4.2.1.2 Grammar Proficiency Test

4.2.1.2.1 Category 1: High Success Rate (60% and above)

- **Question 1:** "How long have they _____ there?"
- **Correct Answer:** been waiting
- **Success Rate:** 63.3%

This question involves a commonly used expression when asking about ongoing actions that started in the past. Many students are familiar with this type of question, especially from listening or speaking practice.

- **Question 4:** "Where _____ he work?"
- **Correct Answer:** does
- **Success Rate:** 90.0%

A basic present simple question formation. Since it is well-practiced and familiar, as well as one of the auxiliaries, there is no surprise it scored high.

- **Question 5:** “The film _____ by Quentin Tarantino.”
- **Correct Answer:** was directed
- **Success Rate:** 80.0%

A passive structure in the past simple. Likely drilled in classrooms often, especially using examples with well-known figures.

- **Question 7:** “She’s from _____, so she speaks _____.”
- **Correct Answer:** Spain ... Spanish
- **Success Rate:** 100.0%

The link between “Spain” and “Spanish” is very familiar and regularly used in beginner-level conversations and exercises. The sentence is also clear and simple in structure, which made it easy for all students to understand and answer correctly.

- **Question 8:** “She _____ in a small house near the park.
- **Correct Answer:** lives
- **Success Rate:** 83.3%

This is a straightforward example of the present simple tense used in a positive statement with a third-person singular subject. Students usually become comfortable with this structure early in their studies, especially in everyday contexts like describing where someone lives.

- **Question 9:** “That smells good! What _____?”
- **Correct Answer:** are you cooking?
- **Success Rate:** 76.7%

This is a present continuous question used to ask about something happening at the moment of speaking. Since students usually associate the present continuous with current actions, many were able to successfully recognize it.

- **Question 12:** “Where _____ they from?”
- **Correct Answer:** are
- **Success Rate:** 86.7%

A very common and basic question structure using “to be”. This form appears frequently in beginner conversations, especially when asking about nationality or origin. Because of its simplicity and familiarity from everyday dialogues, most students answered it correctly.

- **Question 13:** “I’m busy on Friday, so I _____ come.”
- **Correct Answer:** can't
- **Success Rate:** 96.7%

This sentence clearly requires a modal verb that expresses inability. “Can’t” fits both logically and grammatically. The near-perfect score reflects how confidently students handle this structure. Almost none of the distractor options swayed students from choosing the correct one.

- **Question 14:** “Take a sandwich with you _____ you get hungry later.”
- **Correct Answer:** in case
- **Success Rate:** 80.0%

“In case” introduces a precautionary reason, meaning something that might happen. It is a fixed expression that commonly appears in practical, real-world contexts like giving advice. Because it is a familiar chunk of language taught in common scenarios, most students recognized and applied it correctly.

- **Question 15:** “She _____ have short hair, but now it’s long.”
- **Correct Answer:** used to

- **Success Rate:** 76.7%

“Used to” is the go-to phrase for describing past states or habits that have changed.

Students are typically introduced to this structure when discussing personal history or comparing past and present, and evidently, they do not exhibit any noteworthy struggle to comprehend it.

- **Question 17:** “I _____ to Germany last year.”
- **Correct Answer:** went
- **Success Rate:** 90.0%

A clear example of the past simple, made even easier by the time marker “last year”.

Although “went” is irregular, it is one of the first and most frequently used past tense verbs students encounter.

- **Question 18:** “Put _____ bag on _____ table, then give me _____ apple and _____ bar of chocolate.”
- **Correct Answer:** the ... the ... an ... a
- **Success Rate:** 73.3%

This sentence requires understanding when to use definite and indefinite articles.

Although article usage can be tricky, the context here makes it fairly clear.

- **Question 19:** “I _____ been hit by a car, but luckily I just managed to get out of the way.”
- **Success Rate:** 73.3%
- **Correct Answer:** could have

This question tested students' understanding of expressing past possibility using modal verbs. The structure "could have + past participle" is commonly used in hypothetical or near-miss situations, which tend to come up in storytelling or recounting experiences.

- **Question 20:** "I spend too much time _____. I'd like _____ more time for myself and my family."
- **Correct Answer:** working ... to have
- **Success Rate:** 76.7%

This question involved two common verb patterns: work + -ing and would like + to-infinitive. These are both frequently practiced in ESL/EFL classrooms and relevant to personal expression, which makes them familiar to students. Since both structures are highly formulaic and regularly appear in conversations and textbook exercises, students likely relied on memorized chunks or patterns to answer correctly.

- **Question 22:** "I don't know where she is. I suppose she _____ got stuck in traffic."
- **Correct Answer:** might have
- **Success Rate:** 76.7%

Like Question 19, this item also assessed knowledge of past deduction using modal verbs. The phrase "might have got stuck" is a logical inference about a past event, especially with the presence of the item "suppose", which indicates uncertainty the same way "might have" does.

- **Question 23:** "Whose bag is this? It's _____."
- **Correct Answer:** It's mine
- **Success Rate:** 93.3%

Possessive pronouns (e.g., mine, yours, his, hers) are basic grammar features typically introduced early in English learning. The structure of the question and answer is very formulaic and commonly drilled: “Whose X is this?” — “It’s mine”. Students have likely seen or practiced this kind of dialogue repeatedly in textbooks, classroom roleplays, and listening activities.

- **Question 24:** “That wasn’t a good idea – you _____ thought about it more carefully.”
- **Correct Answer:** should have
- **Success Rate:** 66.7%

The phrase “should have” is a common way of expressing regret or missed responsibility, often heard in both written and spoken English. The logic of the sentence guides students easily to this structure, making it a familiar and intuitive choice.

- **Question 27:** “I _____ like getting up early.”
- **Correct Answer:** don’t
- **Success Rate:** 80.0%

A simple negative sentence with a very natural and common expression. This kind of construction is usually taught early on and reinforced frequently. Its straightforward structure and personal context made it easy for most students to get right.

- **Question 32:** “He _____ ever works as _____ as he should.”
- **Correct Answer:** hardly ... hard
- **Success Rate:** 66.7%

This sentence includes two similar-looking but differently used words. Despite the subtlety, the phrase “hardly ever” is often taught as a fixed expression, and “works hard” is

also very familiar. Students who know both expressions were likely able to recognize the correct pairing easily.

- **Question 33:** “Do you think it’s _____ rain tomorrow?”
- **Correct Answer:** going to
- **Success Rate:** 70.0%

Predicting the weather is a common topic in English classrooms, and “going to” is a typical phrase for future predictions. The sentence mirrors everyday usage closely, which helped students apply what they have practiced in relatable situations.

- ***Overall Takeaway***

The 20 grammar questions with high success rates generally reflect core structures, frequent classroom exposure, and familiar real-world contexts. These questions indicate that students have a good grasp of the following:

- Present simple structures like “Where does he work?” and “She lives...”
- Modal verbs such as “can’t” (ability), “should have” (advice), and “might have” / “could have” (possibility)
- Common past simple verbs like “went” and passive constructions like “was directed”
- Possessive pronouns, e.g., “It’s mine”
- Auxiliary verbs such as “are” and “does” used in questions and statements
- Fixed or familiar expressions like “used to”, “hardly ever”, “going to rain”, “in case”, and “spend time working”
- Foundational grammar structures

The results of this category suggest that students perform best with familiar, frequently practiced grammar structures and vocabulary presented in clear, everyday contexts, especially when supported by formulaic expressions and minimal distractors.

4.2.1.2.2 Category 2: Moderate Success Rate (Between 40% and 60%)

- **Question 2:** “If I had more time, I _____ do more exercise.”
- **Correct Answer:** would
- **Success Rate:** 53.3%

This question tests second conditional grammar, which expresses hypothetical situations. Even though it is commonly taught, the conditional structure still poses a challenge for some students due to confusion between different types (e.g., first vs. second conditional).

- **Question 3:** “He drives quite _____, but his brother drives really _____.”
- **Correct Answer:** slowly ... fast
- **Success Rate:** 50.0%

This sentence checks understanding of adverbs versus adjectives, especially irregular forms like “fast” that function as both. The contrast structure may confuse students who struggle with parts of speech. Two of the distractor options that were chosen over the correct one were “slow...fast” and “slowly...fastly”.

- **Question 6:** “It was the first time he _____ anything so spicy.”
- **Correct Answer:** had eaten
- **Success Rate:** 53.3%

This question tests past perfect usage, which is less frequent in casual conversation. Students commonly misuse it or default to past simple, even when the context clearly indicates a sequence of past events. The distractor option “has eaten” was selected by almost half the sample, which indicates difficulty in deciding when to use the past perfect and present perfect, even though “was” clearly indicates the past.

- **Question 11:** “Let’s go to the cinema. - Great idea! What film _____ we watch?”
- **Correct Answer:** shall
- **Success Rate:** 53.3%

Though grammatically correct, “shall” is less common in modern spoken English, making it less familiar to students. Many of them opted for “will” and “are we going to”, which appear more frequently.

- **Question 16:** “I drink coffee _____.”
- **Correct Answer:** twice a day
- **Success Rate:** 56.7%

This item involves frequency expressions. While relatively simple, some students were distracted by similar time expressions such as “twice in day”, or overlook the collocational fit.

- **Question 21:** “I was _____ exhausted by the end of the day.”
- **Correct Answer:** completely
- **Success Rate:** 46.7%

This question examines knowledge of adverb collocations with adjectives. Students may struggle to distinguish between intensifiers and misuse options like “very” or “extremely” in

this context, as the term “exhaust” means to empty or use all available resources, and emptying something cannot be done “extremely” or “very”, but “completely”. Clearly, this sentence required some nuanced understanding of such term.

- **Question 25:** “How did this _____ broken?”
- **Correct Answer:** get
- **Success Rate:** 40.0%

This structure requires understanding of causative/passive forms. It is more advanced and can confuse students expecting a passive verb like “was” instead of the causative “get.”

- **Question 28:** “I wouldn’t say that to him if I _____ you.”
- **Correct Answer:** were
- **Success Rate:** 50.0%

This is another second conditional sentence, with additional challenge due to the subjunctive “were,” which sounds unusual to students accustomed to using “was” with singular subjects.

- **Question 29:** “Could you tell me _____?”
- **Correct Answer:** where the bus stop is
- **Success Rate:** 40.0%

This indirect question checks for word order awareness. Many students mistakenly apply question word order (e.g., “where is the bus stop”) instead of the statement order required here.

- **Question 30:** "I'll send it to you _____ I get the money."
- **Correct Answer:** as soon as
- **Success Rate:** 56.7%

Students must recognize future time clauses where present simple is used for future meaning, which often conflicts with their intuition to use future tenses, like the distractor "until".

- **Question 36:** "This house is _____, but also _____."
- **Correct Answer:** bigger ... more expensive
- **Success Rate:** 46.7%

This tests comparative forms, including irregular and multi-syllable adjectives. Many students got distracted by one of the options that misapply comparative rules or mix forms, "more big...more expensive".

- **Question 38:** "I've already called her four times _____."
- **Correct Answer:** today
- **Success Rate:** 46.7%

This tests students' ability to link present perfect tense with appropriate time references. "Today" fits naturally, but distractors like "yesterday" and "before" did mislead them.

- **Question 39:** "By next month I _____ all my exams, and I can relax!"
- **Correct Answer:** will have finished
- **Success Rate:** 46.7%

This future perfect construction is rarely used in everyday speech and often taught late in grammar instruction. Students might default to simpler future tenses due to unfamiliarity, such as the option “will finish” and “will be finishing”.

- ***Overall Takeaway***

This category comprising 13 questions indicates that students grasp the general structure of these grammar points, however, some uncertainty or inconsistency remains.

- Students show partial understanding of essential grammar structures but lack full confidence.
- There is noticeable confusion between similar forms (e.g., past perfect vs. present perfect, first vs. second conditional).
- Less frequent or more formal structures (e.g., future perfect, subjunctive “were”, indirect questions) cause more difficulty.
- Some errors come from overgeneralizing rules or relying on familiar patterns (e.g., using “was” instead of “were”).
- Students often struggle with collocations, adverb usage, and comparative forms.

As such, these results highlight the need for continued, targeted practice in mid-level grammar concepts to help students develop greater precision and confidence in their usage.

4.2.1.2.3 Category 3: Low Success Rate (Below 40%)

- **Question 10:** “She’s wearing a _____ dress.”
- **Correct Answer:** beautiful long black
- **Success Rate:** 26.7%

This question tested students' ability to order adjectives correctly according to conventional English patterns (opinion → size → color → noun). Although the adjectives themselves ("beautiful", "long", "black") are very common individually, knowing the correct sequence is more complex and very commonly underemphasized in instruction. The low success rate suggests that students may know basic adjectives but struggle with the rules of adjective order, which are often intuitive for native speakers but must be explicitly taught for EFL students. The fact that adjective ordering does not usually interfere with basic communication might also mean it receives less corrective feedback during learning which allows mistakes to persist.

- **Question 26:** "I'd love to _____ in the 19th century."
- **Correct Answer:** have lived
- **Success Rate:** 13.3%

This question tests the use of perfect infinitive to express unreal past desires. Students very commonly miss this structure because they associate "would love" with the present or future, leading to their selection of distractors like "live" or "lived" instead.

- **Question 31:** "Winters here _____ be really cold sometimes, so make sure you bring warm clothes!"
- **Correct Answer:** can
- **Success Rate:** 36.7%

This tests the modal "can" to express general possibility or ability. Many students confused it with modals like "may" or "could", two of the distractors, and misunderstand the tone of advice versus possibility.

- **Question 34:** “But they _____ be away – I saw them this morning!”
- **Correct Answer:** can't
- **Success Rate:** 26.7%

This tests modal verbs for logical deduction in the present. A large number of students confused “can't” with “mustn't” or “shouldn't”, not realizing the sentence expresses impossibility based on evidence.

- **Question 35:** “If he _____ one minute later, he _____ the train.”
- **Correct Answer:** had arrived ... would have missed
- **Success Rate:** 36.7%

This is a third conditional sentence expressing regret or hypothetical past. Many students confused this form with second conditional, or mix up verb tenses, which displays incomplete mastery of conditionals.

- **Question 37:** “I wish he _____ so rude to people when we go out.”
- **Correct Answer:** wouldn't be
- **Success Rate:** 30.0%

This question requires understanding of wish + “would” to express irritation or desire for change in future behavior. Students may incorrectly use past simple forms due to confusion with other “I wish” structures, as many of them selected “won't be”.

- **Question 40:** “_____ spent time abroad when I was a student, I found it easier to get used to _____ in another country.”
- **Correct Answer:** Having ... living
- **Success Rate:** 23.3%

This complex sentence tests gerund and participle clause use. Students are likely unfamiliar with using “having” + past participle to describe a past experience as a noun phrase, and confuse gerunds with infinitives.

- ***Overall Takeaway***

These seven questions reveal areas where students face persistent difficulties. The low performance across all these questions shows deeper challenges in mastering complex and less frequently practiced grammatical forms.

- Difficulty with Adjective Ordering.
- Poor understanding of unreal past structures, especially with perfect infinitives (e.g., would love to have lived).
- Confusion with modals used for possibility vs. deduction, such as can, can't, and may, often misused due to similar meanings or unfamiliarity with contextual use.
- Lack of clarity on conditionals, particularly third conditionals, which suggests incomplete understanding of how past hypotheticals are constructed.
- Difficulty with “wish” constructions, especially those expressing frustration or desire for change, leading to confusion between “would”, “won't”, or simple past forms.
- Limited exposure to gerunds and participle clauses, which affects their ability to distinguish when to use “having” + past participle versus other verb forms.
- General lack of fluency in identifying grammatical tone or nuance, such as the difference between stating a fact, giving advice, or making a deduction.

Hence, this category of questions reflects deeper grammatical gaps in advanced structures that are not always emphasized in routine instruction. Striving to enhance awareness of how

grammar shifts with context has a high potential to improve students' performance in these areas.

4.2.1.3 Spelling Proficiency Test

The spelling component of the proficiency test aimed to assess students' ability to accurately write 40 high-frequency and commonly misspelled English words. This section presents the percentage of correct responses for each word based on data collected from 30 students. Spelling was determined to be the most challenging of the three assessed areas (vocabulary, grammar, spelling), with overall low success rates across the test items. The following analysis aims to highlight which words were most problematic as well as uncover patterns and specific difficulties students encountered with English orthography. Such will be done through four categories: Words with the Highest Success Rates (40% and above), Words with Moderate Accuracy (between 20% and 40%), Words with Very Low Accuracy (Below 20%), Words with the Lowest Success Rates (0% Correct). This grouping is different from the previous one because of how low the overall performance in this test is, even if it can be argued that 20%–39.9%, for example, would not be considered moderate in other cases, it is in this case.

Table 4. *Percentages of Correct Answers per Word*

No.	Word	% Correct	No.	Word	% Correct
1	Accelerate	0.00%	21	Laboratory	73.30%
2	Accessible	6.70%	22	Medieval	13.30%
3	Accessory	13.30%	23	Noticeable	13.30%
4	Accommodate	0.00%	24	Occasion	30.00%
5	Acknowledge	26.70%	25	Occurrence	0.00%
6	Acquire	46.70%	26	Parallel	30.00%
7	Aggressive	16.70%	27	Parliament	13.30%
8	Amphitheater	20.00%	28	Perseverance	13.30%
9	Anecdote	23.30%	29	Persuade	43.30%
10	Apparent	26.70%	30	Phenomenon	43.30%
11	Category	46.70%	31	Privilege	3.30%
12	Committee	0.00%	32	Pursue	3.30%
13	Consensus	0.00%	33	Receive	13.30%
14	Curriculum	3.30%	34	Seize	10.00%
15	Deceive	3.30%	35	Separate	23.30%
16	Exaggerate	16.70%	36	Subtle	3.30%
17	Government	33.30%	37	Threshold	16.70%
18	Guarantee	3.30%	38	Tragedy	50.00%
19	Harass	20.00%	39	Vague	43.30%
20	Hypocrisy	0.00%	40	Weird	46.70%

4.2.1.3.1 Words with the Highest Success Rates (40% and above)

Only a small subset of the 40 dictated words were spelled correctly by more than 40% of students, which indicates that these words were the most accessible to students:

- **Laboratory (73.3%)**
- **Tragedy (50.0%)**
- **Weird (46.7%)**
- **Acquire (46.7%)**
- **Category (46.7%)**
- **Phenomenon (43.3%)**
- **Persuade (43.3%)**
- **Vague (43.3%)**

These results suggest that students were more likely to spell words correctly when those words:

- Appear frequently in academic or classroom discourse (e.g., laboratory, category).
- Follow more predictable phoneme–grapheme correspondence, even when slightly irregular (e.g., tragedy, persuade).
- Are encountered across subjects and contexts (e.g., phenomenon, acquire).
- Have unique orthographic features that stand out, such as the unusual “ei” in weird, which may actually help memorization due to its oddity and frequency in informal speech.

High spelling accuracy appears to be linked to frequency of exposure, cross-curricular relevance, and distinctive spelling patterns that either follow rules or are memorable precisely because they break them.

4.2.1.3.2 Words with Moderate Accuracy (Between 20% and 40%)

Words in this middle range were somewhat more familiar but still presented significant difficulty:

- **Government (33.3%)**
- **Occasion (30.0%)**
- **Parallel (30.0%)**
- **Acknowledge (26.7%)**
- **Apparent (26.7%)**
- **Anecdote (23.3%)**
- **Separate (23.3%)**
- **Amphitheater (20.0%)**
- **Harass (20.0%)**

These words are often heard in academic contexts but are phonetically misleading or orthographically tricky:

- Silent letters and hidden double letters (e.g., the silent “n” in government, or the double “s” in harass).
- Confusing vowel patterns (acknowledge, occasion).
- Visual complexity (e.g., the combination of “ae” in amphitheater).

These words may be semi-familiar but are likely stored incorrectly in students' mental lexicons. Their visual and phonological inconsistencies create hurdles that require repeated written reinforcement, spelling games, or visual memory techniques.

4.2.1.3.3 Words with Very Low Accuracy (Below 20%)

A large number of words fell into the very low accuracy category, meaning fewer than 1 in 5 students spelled them correctly:

- **Aggressive (16.7%)**
- **Exaggerate (16.7%)**
- **Threshold (16.7%)**
- **Medieval (13.3%)**
- **Noticeable (13.3%)**
- **Parliament (13.3%)**
- **Perseverance (13.3%)**
- **Receive (13.3%)**
- **Accessory (13.3%)**
- **Pursue (3.3%)**
- **Privilege (3.3%)**
- **Curriculum (3.3%)**
- **Deceive (3.3%)**
- **Seize (10.0%)**
- **Subtle (3.3%)**

These words typically:

- Include confusing rules like “i” before “e” except after “c” (receive, deceive), which students may not consistently apply.
- Contain letter-sound mismatches or silent letters (subtle, threshold).
- Are academic or formal words that are rarely used in speech (perseverance, parliament).
- Combine multiple spelling patterns in a single word (exaggerate, aggressive).

This group reflects words that students may have seen but never mastered due to orthographic irregularity, phonetic unpredictability, and infrequent written use. Instruction for these words would benefit from a focus on root word analysis and mnemonic strategies.

4.2.1.3.4 Words with the Lowest Success Rates (0% Correct)

Six words stood out as exceptionally difficult, with no student spelling them correctly:

- **Accelerate (0.0%)**
- **Accommodate (0.0%)**
- **Committee (0.0%)**
- **Consensus (0.0%)**
- **Occurrence (0.0%)**
- **Hypocrisy (0.0%)**

These words share a number of complex characteristics:

- Multiple double letters that are hard to recall (e.g., accommodate, committee, occurrence).

- Unfamiliar or abstract meaning, reducing contextual reinforcement (hypocrisy, consensus).
- Latin or Greek roots that offer no clear clues to pronunciation or spelling for students whose L1 is not Latin-based.
- Minimal exposure in everyday classroom conversations, resulting memorization to be more difficult.

These words likely require explicit instruction, visual reinforcement, and morphological awareness strategies. Their complete absence of correct spelling suggests that they might not be part of students' active or even passive vocabulary, despite being important academic words.

As such, the findings from the spelling test confirm that spelling is the most challenging aspect of writing proficiency among the three areas assessed in this study. The pervasive difficulties students faced, which are evidenced by the extremely low success rates on a majority of the test items, point to a deeper need for structured and strategic spelling instruction.

Specifically, the test results highlight a pattern of errors linked to predictable linguistic factors: double consonants, silent letters, irregular spelling rules, and low lexical frequency. These patterns suggest that students are struggling with both the mechanical act of spelling and accessing and applying orthographic knowledge that is often taken for granted in instruction. Phonetic strategies alone appear to be insufficient, especially in a language like English, where orthography frequently diverges from pronunciation.

This difficulty in spelling may also have implications for students' writing fluency and self-expression. If students are hesitant or uncertain about how to spell words they know or

want to use, they may avoid complex vocabulary altogether, thus limiting their expressive range. Therefore, accounting for spelling difficulties is a matter of accuracy and of empowering students to write with greater confidence, range, and authenticity.

4.2.1.3.5 The Role of Vocabulary Knowledge in Spelling Accuracy

Even with the separation of vocabulary and spelling and treating them as individual aspects, one cannot deny the absolute dependency they have on one another. With such low scores in the spelling test, the conclusion that students are just that incompetent at spelling is quite linear and shallow. It is for this reason that other causes should be identified in order to point future research in the right direction through accounting for such interplay, which is evidently not addressed appropriately in the present research.

Ehri's (2005) theory of orthographic mapping explains how readers form connections between the spellings, pronunciations, and meanings of words. This process is crucial for fluent reading and accurate spelling. Ehri emphasizes that recognizing a word's spelling is intrinsically linked to understanding its meaning and pronunciation. Other research also indicates that combining spelling and vocabulary instruction leads to notable improvements in various literacy areas, including phonemic awareness, word reading, and comprehension. Weiser and Mathes (2011) found that integrated decoding and spelling instruction in early grades resulted in notable gains across these domains.

Therefore, even if spelling is the most common challenge among the three establishes aspect, that does not defy the fact that it must be taught in parallel with vocabulary. Teaching grammar as a standalone subject makes more sense, and has been done for the longest time, but when it comes to the remaining two aspects, their interconnectedness warrants them to be teachable simultaneously. This can be done through introducing students to a new lexical

item, its definition, then its spelling, all done without overwhelming them thanks to such interconnectedness.

4.2.2 Analysis and Interpretation of The Semi-structured Questionnaire

This section presents a thematic analysis of the teacher responses gathered from a semi-structured questionnaire administered to six of them with experience in teaching or correcting student writing. Due to the small number of the respondents, the coding stage was done manually, and did not call for the need to use more advanced coding software like MAXQDA. The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions that aimed to allow teachers to indicate frequencies, attitudes, and beliefs about the teaching of vocabulary, grammar, and spelling, and to elaborate on the challenges they observe in their classrooms.

Thanks to the inductive nature of thematic analysis, a number of categories emerged from the responses, which were then grouped under broader themes. Particular attention was given to patterns of agreement, variation, and recurring concerns expressed across responses. Direct quotations are used where relevant to provide insight into teacher reasoning. The analysis draws on both the frequency of particular views, and the depth of qualitative justifications provided, which links them to broader educational literature and student performance trends.

❖ Curricular Misalignment and Lack of Foundational Practice

Several teachers emphasized that students are expected to engage in advanced writing tasks (such as essay writing) before having mastered fundamental skills like sentence or paragraph construction. T6 described this issue in depth, citing the current syllabus (CANEVA) as “needs, sometimes, more higher abilities on the part of students but the fact is not”. For instance, they noted, “the case of 2nd year students struggling with essay writing because they are still in need to practice more about paragraph writing.”

This sentiment was echoed by T5, who observed that writing is a “package that involves many skills and competencies related to language proficiency, creativity and character”, which are often rushed due to curriculum pacing or institutional pressures. When foundational competencies are overlooked, students face increased difficulty with more complex forms of writing, which exacerbates errors in spelling, grammar, and vocabulary usage. This theme sheds light on the curriculum-practice gap, where students are not given enough time to internalize and consolidate lower-level skills before progressing to higher-order tasks.

❖ **Overcrowded Classrooms and Limited Feedback Opportunities**

A couple of teachers raised concerns about large class sizes and their impact on the effectiveness of writing instruction. T6 stated: “The huge number of students per class which does not allow the teacher to give feedback to all, especially when it comes to writing”. Writing tasks demand individualized feedback, yet the time and workload associated with correcting dozens of scripts is a common deterrent.

This structural constraint inhibits teachers from giving detailed, corrective feedback. Without this feedback loop, students are less likely to recognize and address their own errors, and their mistakes become fossilized. The findings mirror well-documented challenges in education systems where high teacher-to-student ratios hinder performance. Smaller class sizes at both primary and secondary levels allow teachers to give more individual attention and promote greater engagement, especially among lower-achieving secondary students, who are more likely to disengage in larger classrooms (Blatchford, Bassett, & Brown, 2011).

❖ **Spelling Instruction Is Infrequently Addressed**

Although all six teachers unanimously affirmed that spelling is just as important as vocabulary and grammar, their classroom practices suggest otherwise. When asked how

frequently they explicitly taught spelling, the majority (four out of six) admitted to doing so rarely or never. Only one teacher reported teaching it “often,” and another said “always” (see **Figure 9**). Furthermore, when evaluating curriculum support for spelling instruction, all teachers rated it as only “moderately well”, which indicates systemic insufficiency in how spelling is embedded within the writing curriculum.

This disparity between perceived importance and actual practice signals a significant gap. Teachers do recognize spelling as a core component of writing, but struggle to allocate sufficient classroom time to it, commonly due to institutional or curricular pressures and, as previously mentioned, time constraints. As one T1 stated, “These three aspects are taught during the two first years. Then, they are completely neglected by learners”, which shows that students may be initially exposed to these aspects, however, there is little reinforcement later when academic demands increase. Nevertheless, as previously established in Chapter Two, spelling repeatedly receives less instructional attention compared to other linguistic proficiencies. Some educators consider the English spelling system too inconsistent and unpredictable to justify direct instruction (Simonsen & Gunter, 2001, as cited in Reed, 2012). It is therefore unsurprising that the current sample of teachers may have similarly overlooked it, whether consciously or not, even if their intentions were not to diminish its importance.

❖ **Learner-Related Factors: Motivation, Awareness, and Lack of Practice and Reading**

Several teachers observed that students themselves often display negative attitudes towards writing. T1 shared “Most students do not like writing because they are short of relevant vocabulary”, while T2 explained that “most students do not care to improve their writing”. This reflects a lack of motivation and confidence among students, which usually stems from their limited lexical and structural resources. When students feel ill-equipped to

express themselves accurately, they are more likely to disengage from the writing process altogether. Such attitudes can create a cycle of avoidance and stagnation, in which students avoid writing because they struggle, and they continue to struggle because they avoid writing.

All teachers have pointed out students' bad habit of not practicing enough, with T4 stating that "There must be complementary cooperation between what is taught in the syllabus and the further personal practice on the student's own to develop his level of writing". Such suggests a need to build greater metalinguistic awareness in students, as well as integrate more in-class practice. Additionally, a number of teachers have also mentioned the positive effect reading has on the development of the writing skill. T3 says "Improving reading habits will help a lot, in addition to implementing in-class reading and writing tasks", other teachers support this, articulating that students underperform in writing tasks because they lack sufficient vocabulary, which is due to the lack of reading.

❖ **Parallel and Integrated Instruction of Vocabulary, Grammar, and Spelling**

All six teachers agreed that vocabulary, grammar, and spelling should be taught in an integrated manner, rather than as isolated components. Four teachers specifically emphasized the importance of aligning this instruction with written expression modules. The argument here is pedagogical: compartmentalized instruction may result in compartmentalized knowledge, where students are unable to apply what they have learned when composing extended written texts.

T1 articulated this clearly, stating, "These aspects should be taught in parallel with written expression and academic writing modules". T4 added, "As language is a complementary structure that combines the three components, it is of paramount importance to emphasize them equally in the teaching process". This holistic approach reflects current best practices in writing pedagogy, which advocate for context-based integration to foster

simultaneous development of orthographic, lexical, and grammatical competence, which T5 and T6 also agree on through the way they stated they teach grammar and vocabulary.

The need for this approach is confirmed by student performance data. Grammar, the most frequently taught aspect, scored the highest on average, followed by vocabulary, with spelling lagging significantly. This uneven performance showcases that the current imbalance in teaching emphasis has measurable and evident consequences. Integrated instruction could bridge these gaps and support students more consistently across writing subskills.

4.3 Synthesis of the Findings

This section provides an integrated summary of findings drawn from both the quantitative and qualitative data. The purpose of this synthesis is to answer the study's central research questions through examining patterns that emerged across both data sets. By way of comparing what students struggled with most and how teachers perceive and address these aspects of writing, the section puts forward areas of alignment and disconnect between instruction, perception, and student reality.

- RQ1: What forms the biggest challenge for EFL students while writing (vocabulary, grammar, or spelling)?

The proficiency tests data unambiguously identified spelling as the most significant challenge for students. A large majority of the 40 spelling items received extremely low accuracy rates, with nearly half of the words scoring under 20% and several at 0% correct spelling. Even commonly used words such as “committee”, “consensus”, “accommodate”, and “curriculum” proved inaccessible to students, which suggests widespread unfamiliarity with both the words themselves and their correct orthographic forms.

By contrast, vocabulary and grammar tests showed considerably higher success rates. Students performed well on vocabulary items related to daily life, simple adjectives, and

familiar nouns, while grammar performance was strongest in areas like present simple, past simple, modal verbs, and question forms. This contrast pushes the notion that even if students are generally acquiring functional grammar and a modest working vocabulary, spelling accuracy remains a substantial and very commonly neglected barrier to writing proficiency.

Moreover, the spelling test results stresses the idea that correct spelling depends on lexical knowledge. Students cannot be expected to spell what they do not know or have not encountered with sufficient frequency and clarity. This connection extends the implication that spelling instruction must occur in tandem with vocabulary teaching, not separately or incidentally. students need exposure to new words in meaningful contexts, followed by practice in both usage and accurate spelling.

- RQ2: How do teachers perceive the relative importance of vocabulary, grammar, and spelling in writing instruction?

Teachers' responses to the questionnaire reveal that all three aspects, vocabulary, grammar, and spelling, are perceived as equally important in writing instruction. In Question 5 of the questionnaire, every teacher explicitly agreed that vocabulary, grammar, and spelling are all essential components that must be taught and reinforced simultaneously for effective writing development. This shows a strong shared belief that writing proficiency is not built by focusing on one element at the expense of others, but through a balanced integration of all.

Nevertheless, when teachers elaborated on their classroom practices and experiences, some nuanced differences emerged. Grammar was often emphasized as the foundation for clarity, correctness, and coherence, and seen as providing the necessary framework within which vocabulary and spelling operate. Vocabulary was recognized as equally crucial, particularly for enhancing students' ability to express themselves precisely and creatively. Teachers acknowledged that students frequently lack a wide and appropriate range of

vocabulary, and that enriching their lexical repertoire is essential for producing sophisticated and meaningful writing.

Spelling, although clearly receiving less explicit instructional focus (see Figure 9), was also deemed critical. Teachers admitted that persistent spelling errors can detract from the credibility and professionalism of students' writing. Some practical challenges, such as large class sizes and limited instructional time, were cited as reasons why spelling might not be addressed as rigorously as grammar or vocabulary.

Importantly, while slight variations exist in emphasis during day-to-day instruction, the overarching consensus from teachers was that vocabulary, grammar, and spelling are interconnected and should be treated with equal importance in teaching writing skills. This perspective showcases a proper understanding among teachers that successful writing cannot thrive unless all three areas are developed together. Still, within the teachers' responses, it can be subtly sensed that spelling did not receive as much credit as the other two aspects.

- RQ3: What do teachers believe students lack most among vocabulary, grammar, and spelling?

The analysis of teacher responses shows a clear distribution of opinions regarding what students lack the most. Among the six teachers who responded, T3 explicitly identified grammar as the area where students struggle the most, supporting this by saying that students may have good ideas and vocabulary, but they “stutter and commit errors that hinder them from completing the idea or explaining it in the first place” when required to apply grammar correctly.

T2 and T5 emphasized vocabulary as the main deficiency by pointing to issues such as limited lexical range, poor word choice, lack of collocations, and insufficient reading and

exposure to English. For instance, one noted that students “lack words and their meanings, collocations and combinations”, which obstructs their writing fluency and quality.

Meanwhile, the remaining three teachers believed that students struggle equally with vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. They attributed this situation to a range of causes, including lack of practice, insufficient reading, heavy reliance on audiovisual and informal sources (e.g., chatting on social media), and weak language foundations overall.

When comparing these teacher beliefs to the actual performance results from the quantitative data, a key observation emerges. The students' test scores indicated that spelling was by far the most problematic area, showing extremely low success rates across most items (many words were spelled correctly by 0% to 20% of students). Vocabulary and grammar, while also presenting challenges, showed significantly higher proficiency rates in comparison.

Thus, teachers recognize that students face difficulties in all three aspects, and some specifically emphasized grammar or vocabulary, however, the real-world data from the proficiency tests reveal that spelling is the most critical and neglected skill. This points to a slight mismatch between teacher perceptions and actual student performance. In particular, even teachers who believed that all three aspects are equally problematic may underestimate just how serious the spelling issue is, and this is especially amplified by the fact that no one among all six selected the option that students exclusively struggle with spelling, meaning they truly do not recognize, or realize, how problematic it is.

In the end, such finding draw attention to the need for greater, more systematic attention to spelling in writing instruction; a skill that appears to have fallen behind both in teaching priorities and in students' abilities, and evidently, it should be taught hand in hand with vocabulary as previously argued.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed pronounced patterns concerning EFL students' writing difficulties and teachers' perceptions of these challenges. Quantitative results clearly displayed that spelling represents the most persistent obstacle, followed by vocabulary then grammar, while qualitative insights brought into sharper focus the intertwined nature of these difficulties and the instructional factors contributing to them. Teachers' perceptions were generally in parallel with the empirical results, though certain discrepancies were noted, namely regarding the emphasis, or lack thereof, placed on spelling instruction. Overall, the results painted the needed picture of writing proficiency development and prioritized both student-centered and instruction-centered factors that must be addressed to foster more effective writing competence.

General Conclusion

The idea for this research emerged from the researcher's personal experience within the university environment, where they observed a noticeable reluctance among her classmates towards writing tasks in English. Writing was very often perceived as tedious or intimidating, with many students avoiding it altogether or engaging in it with minimal motivation. This prevailing attitude was not limited to a single course or context but appeared to be a general trend across writing assignments. The lack of enthusiasm and confidence in writing, particularly in English, stood out to the researcher and raised concerns about why such negativity existed around a skill so central to academic success. Over time, these consistent patterns of disengagement and difficulty prompted deeper reflection and gave rise to a genuine interest in understanding the core issues that might be hindering students' writing performance.

In order to address this reoccurring behavioral pattern, this study was conducted to examine writing aspects individually, namely through determining which among the three core writing aspects—vocabulary, grammar, and spelling—poses the greatest challenge to students when they develop their written productions. In addition to quantitatively identifying this challenge, the research aimed to investigate how teachers perceive the relative importance of these elements and what they believe students most lack in their writing, in addition to how they handle them in classrooms. Recognizing the critical role that writing plays in academic achievement, professional development, and communicative competence, the study sought to provide evidence-based insight into both learner difficulties and instructional priorities.

To fulfill these objectives, a Mixed-methods Embedded Case Study was deemed most suitable and hence adopted. Quantitative data were obtained from a series of proficiency tests measuring students' performance in vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. These were

supplemented by qualitative data gathered through a semi-structured questionnaire completed by teachers with direct experience teaching or evaluating writing. This dual approach allowed the study to provide both measurable outcomes backed up by interpretive insights into classroom realities.

The findings were clear: Spelling emerged as the most significant challenge for students. Grammar scored highest and vocabulary was the middle ground, which indicates at least a moderate level of familiarity, meanwhile, spelling scores were dramatically lower, with numerous items recording correct response rates below 20%, and some even having 0% success rates. This finding was reinforced by teacher observations, which acknowledged spelling as a noticeable weakness among students, even though it was not always foregrounded in their responses. While all teachers recognized vocabulary, grammar, and spelling as equally important in writing instruction, their comments and emphasis tended to lean more heavily towards grammar and vocabulary. Grammar was frequently highlighted as the structural backbone of writing, valued for its role in ensuring clarity and coherence. Vocabulary was also seen as crucial, yet more amenable to gradual development through exposure and use. Spelling, although recognized as problematic, was not explicitly singled out by most teachers as the primary area of student weakness. This suggests that teachers are indeed aware of students' struggles with spelling, but it may not be as immediately visible or prioritized within their pedagogical focus.

Moreover, the qualitative data revealed additional systemic issues that exacerbate these challenges, including high student-teacher ratios, which limit individualized feedback, and the use of non-specific evaluation practices that leave student errors unaddressed. One teacher pointed out how the large number of students per class does not allow them to give needed feedback to all students. These realities underline the importance of creating

instructional environments where detailed feedback and balanced attention to all core aspects of writing are possible.

Overall, this research has identified spelling as the most challenging aspect for English as a Foreign Language (henceforth, EFL) students, despite being given relatively less emphasis in classroom instruction. Grammar and vocabulary, though also essential, appear to receive more focused attention. These results push forward the need for a more integrated and balanced pedagogical approach, in particular, one that does not overlook spelling as a fundamental component of writing competence. Teachers, curriculum designers, and policy makers should work towards creating writing instruction models that holistically support learners' development in all three domains, thereby encouraging more accurate, confident, and competent EFL writers.

Pedagogical Recommendations and Implications

The outcomes of this research shed light on the key difficulties EFL students encounter in their writing, particularly in relation to vocabulary, grammar, and most notably, spelling. Drawing on evidence from both test-based results and teachers' questionnaire responses, the study highlights several areas in need of targeted pedagogical attention. The following recommendations are proposed to help educators and language instructors respond more effectively to these challenges and better support student development in writing.

- One key recommendation from this study is to teach spelling alongside vocabulary, not as a separate skill. As discussed in Chapter Four, knowing how to spell a word depends on first knowing the word itself, so spelling practice should be built into vocabulary instruction. Teachers could do this through simple tools like dictation, spelling lists, or pattern-based activities that help students remember both the meaning and the form of new words.

- A second important point is the need to give writing more classroom time. The teachers' questionnaire showed students struggle with writing because they do not get enough practice. With time commonly limited, writing is treated as secondary. This needs to change, as writing should be practiced regularly with tasks that involve planning, drafting, and feedback.
- Spelling correction should be more consistent. None of the teachers explicitly stated that they correct misspellings, which can give students the impression that they have committed none, or worse, those misspellings do not matter. Due to this, teachers should set clearer expectations by correcting common mistakes and using strategies like spelling reviews or word logs to build awareness.
- Grammar should be taught in context rather than only through drills. Although grammar is important, students learn it better when it is used in real writing tasks, like letters, stories, or essays, rather than in isolated exercises. This helps them apply grammar more naturally and with purpose.
- For vocabulary, teachers should go beyond just showing new words and encourage active use and variety. Students often stick to familiar, basic words. To improve this, instruction should include using new vocabulary in writing and practicing with collocations and themes.
- Another useful approach is to use diagnostic writing tasks to better track students' individual needs and levels. Even if this research points to spelling as what the whole sample struggles with, students may still have struggles in different areas, so occasional short writing activities can help identify gaps.
- A challenge highlighted by teachers is large class sizes, which limit how much support each student can receive. When reducing class sizes is not possible, teachers

might use group work, peer feedback, or staggered submissions to make writing practice more manageable and effective.

- Finally, professional development on teaching spelling would help. Offering training or resources on how to support spelling in class would strengthen instruction and help students overcome one of their biggest challenges, especially when the irregular nature of the English orthography is taken into consideration.

Limitations of the Study

No research is without its constraints, and acknowledging the limitations of a study is a crucial part of transparent academic work. Limitations provide context for interpreting results and inform future research directions. Every research project, regardless of how carefully planned, faces certain boundaries, whether practical, methodological, or contextual. Despite these inevitable obstacles, the present study successfully achieved its aims and offers informative results about the challenges EFL students face in writing, as well as teachers' instructional perceptions.

Overall, the study faced minimal significant limitations, possibly due to the cooperation and availability of the student participants. Nevertheless, the number of teacher responses (six in total) represents a modest sample. Despite the fact that this was sufficient for a qualitative exploration of teacher perspectives, a broader base of responses would have strengthened the generalizability of the findings. This limitation was primarily because of time constraints, as not all invited teachers were available to participate within the research schedule, and waiting for more responses was unfortunately not possible.

Another limitation concerns the use of adopted proficiency tests for vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. These instruments were selected for their proven reliability and relevance to the target aspects, still, they were not specifically developed for the exact context

of this research. Developing context-sensitive tests could have produced even more tailored insights, but due to time shortage, and the researcher's inexperience, this was not feasible. Nonetheless, the adopted tests functioned quite effectively in capturing the general proficiency levels of the student sample.

Finally, the sample size of 30 students is usually taken as acceptable for many classroom-based case studies and was sufficient to observe clear patterns across the three linguistic aspects, but this does not defy the fact that a larger sample could have provided an even more robust statistical foundation. Including more students would have allowed for further comparisons and subgroup analyses, potentially enriching the quantitative findings.

Suggestions for Future Research

As with all academic inquiries, this study has left open several possibilities for further investigation. The research does successfully explore students' writing challenges and gathered teacher perceptions on vocabulary, grammar, and spelling, but there remains ample room to deepen, refine, and expand on its findings. The following suggestions outline areas where future researchers could meaningfully extend the scope of inquiry.

One evident direction would be to expand the sample size and scope of future research. Although this study involved 30 students and six teachers, the involvement of a larger number of participants from various institutions could enhance the generalizability of the findings. It would also help capture institutional or regional differences that may influence writing proficiency and instructional priorities.

Another valuable direction would be to focus future research on a specific genre of writing in place of investigating general writing ability. This study deliberately focused on the foundational components of writing, vocabulary, grammar, and spelling; because they are essential to all forms of writing. However, narrowing the focus to a single genre, such as

narrative, descriptive, or argumentative writing, has the potential to allow researchers to uncover genre-specific challenges and skills. For instance, argumentative writing involves linguistic accuracy in addition to rhetorical structure, clarity of stance, use of cohesive devices, and strength of evidence. The investigation of such genre-dependent features could reveal how learners manage complex writing demands beyond basic accuracy. This approach would produce more tailored and genre-specific findings and pedagogical implications that could inform targeted instructional design and assessment strategies.

Moreover, investigating longitudinal development in vocabulary, grammar, and spelling is a very suitable approach. Tracking student progress over an extended period may contribute to the understanding of how each of these aspects evolves with instruction and exposure. Longitudinal research could also help pinpoint which instructional interventions are most sustainable and effective in building long-term improvement in writing.

Future studies could also examine classroom practices in more depth, particularly how writing is taught and corrected in real-time. In this research, teacher beliefs were indeed explored, but classroom observations or in-depth interviews could reveal whether those beliefs align with practice, especially regarding spelling, which was acknowledged as problematic but often deprioritized.

Researchers may also develop and test more contextualized assessment tools. Whereas this study adopted existing proficiency tests, future work could make use of designing instruments tailored to the learners' local curriculum or proficiency levels. This could boost the precision of diagnosis and ensure a better fit between testing content and learners' actual classroom experiences.

An important and often overlooked area is to explore learner attitudes and self-awareness, especially in spelling. Investigating how students perceive their own strengths and

weaknesses could complement teacher perspectives and inform more learner-centered instructional strategies. Questionnaires or interviews aimed directly at students would yield valuable qualitative data on motivation, engagement, and perceived relevance.

With the marginal attention spelling receives being evident, future research should assess the impact of explicit spelling instruction, especially when taught in conjunction with vocabulary. An intervention-based study could help determine whether deliberate integration of spelling and vocabulary instruction improves students' spelling accuracy, confidence, and writing fluency over time.

Finally, examining the influence of classroom size on writing feedback may aid in addressing one of the recurring constraints highlighted by teachers. Future research could explore how different student-teacher ratios alter the quality and frequency of written feedback, and whether technology or peer-review strategies can mitigate these challenges in large classrooms.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Informed Consent (Learners)

Participant Informed Consent

Informed Consent

Dear Participant,

I am conducting a study to identify the most common difficulty among three aspects: vocabulary, grammar, and spelling in EFL learners' writing at Biskra University. This study focuses on third-year students and employs a mixed-methods approach to determine which aspect most significantly challenges their written production. You are invited to participate in this study, which will require you to undergo three tests, with each test assessing one of the aforementioned aspects (vocabulary, grammar and spelling). You will be tested across different sessions to ensure that you do not get overwhelmed, as might happen if all the tests were held in one session.

Confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity of your personal information and data gathered throughout the process of conducting this research work will be ensured. Your participation in this research project is voluntary, and your consent can be withdrawn at any time.

If you consent to participating in this study, please sign the attached consent form. Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

For further questions regarding this research project, you are welcome to contact the researcher.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher Contact Details:

Full Name: Ines Didiche

Email: inesdidiche@gmail.com

Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra

Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages

Department of English Language and Literature

I have read and clearly understood the researcher's request. I consent to volunteering as a participant in the research project being undertaken by.....

Name:.....

E-mail:.....

University:.....

Faculty:.....

Department:.....

Section:.....

Date:.....

Signature:

Appendix 2: Participant Informed Consent (Teachers)**Participant Informed Consent**

Dear Participant,

I am conducting a study to identify the most common difficulty among three aspects: vocabulary, grammar, and spelling in EFL learners' writing at Biskra University. This study focuses on third-year students and employs a mixed-methods approach to determine which aspect most significantly challenges their written production. You are invited to participate in this study, which will require you to complete a semi-structured questionnaire designed to enhance the research by incorporating your first-hand experience in teaching writing-related modules to EFL students, as well as your perception of the three aspects of writing examined in this study.

Confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity of your personal information and data gathered throughout the process of conducting this research work will be ensured. Your participation in this research project is voluntary, and your consent can be withdrawn at any time.

If you consent to participating in this study, please sign the attached consent form. Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

For further questions regarding this research project, you are welcome to contact the researcher.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher Contact Details:

Full Name: Ines Didiche

Email: inesdidiche@gmail.com

Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra

Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages

Department of English Language and Literature

I have read and clearly understood the researcher's request. I consent to volunteering as a participant in the research project being undertaken by.....

Name:.....

E-mail:.....

University:.....

Faculty:.....

Department:.....

Section:.....

Date:.....

Signature:

Appendix 3: Consent Letter for the Head of the department of English**Consent Letter for the Head of the English Language and Literature****Department Informed Consent**

Dear Head,

I am currently conducting a research study that aims to identify which aspect of writing (vocabulary, grammar, or spelling) poses the greatest challenge for third year EFL students. This study seeks to enhance both teaching practices and learning outcomes through highlighting the most common difficulty students face in their written productions. At this phase of the research, I will be administering tests to third-year EFL students to assess their vocabulary, grammar, and spelling skills. This will take place over a maximum of two sessions, one session per week.

Hence, I am seeking your consent to administer these tests with a group of third year EFL students within a designated timeframe to ensure smooth coordination with their academic schedule.

Confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy of students' personal information and data gathered throughout the process of conducting this research work will be ensured.

If you consent to the participation of the previously mentioned EFL students in this study, please sign the attached consent form. Your permission and cooperation will be highly appreciated.

For further questions, you are welcome to contact the researcher.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher Contact Details:

Didiche Ines

Email: inesdidiche@gmail.com

Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra

Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages

Department of English Language and Literature

I have read and clearly understood the researcher's request. I consent to the participation of third-year students at the section of English in the research study being undertaken by DIDICHE Ines.

Name:.....

E-mail:.....

University:.....

Faculty:.....

Department:.....

Section:.....

Date:.....

Signature

Appendix 4: The Vocabulary Proficiency Test

1. tired → exhausted
 - o work
 - o office
- small → tiny
- angry → _____
 - o irritated
 - o annoyed
 - o furious
 - o vexed
2. They never argue and they enjoy spending time together. = They _____.
 - o like themselves very much
 - o relate very well
 - o relationship very good
 - o get on very well
3. We nearly missed the plane—we were only just _____.
 - o timely
 - o on time
 - o in time
 - o in time for
4. What time do you go to _____ every day?
 - o workplace
 - o job
5. She's a police officer, so she has to wear a _____ at work.
 - o clothes
 - o uniform
 - o police suit
 - o dress
6. It's 6.15 – a _____ past six.
 - o quarter
 - o half
 - o fourth
 - o fifteen
7. I don't _____ going out tonight.
 - o like
 - o have mood to
 - o want to
 - o feel like
8. She doesn't have brothers or sisters – she's _____.
 - o an only child
 - o a single child
 - o an alone child
 - o a lonely child

9. Your father's brother's daughter is your _____.
- ☐ cousina
 - ☐ cousin
 - ☐ niece
 - ☐ sister

10. At the weekend I _____ with some friends – we went for a curry, then had a couple of drinks.
- ☐ enjoyed
 - ☐ went for fun
 - ☐ went out
 - ☐ played

11. I _____ swimming every Saturday morning.
- ☐ play
 - ☐ do
 - ☐ go
 - ☐ play

12. Argh! This noise is giving me a _____.
- ☐ headouch
 - ☐ headache
 - ☐ headhurt
 - ☐ headpain

13. Do you want a _____ or a return ticket?
- ☐ single
 - ☐ lonely
 - ☐ outbound
 - ☐ one-journey

14. Fruit and vegetables are healthy. =
Fruit and vegetables are _____.
- ☐ healthsome
 - ☐ benefit for you
 - ☐ good for you
 - ☐ good for health

15. apartment → flat
elevator → lift
gasoline → _____
- ☐ coal
 - ☐ fuel
 - ☐ oil
 - ☐ petrol

16. Our teacher doesn't _____ us use mobile phones in class.
- ☐ let
 - ☐ forbid
 - ☐ make
 - ☐ allow

17. friendly → unfriendly

honest → dishonest

polite → _____

- ☐ inpolite
- ☐ impolite
- ☐ dispolite
- ☐ unpolite

18. I'm a bit lost. Can you tell me how to
_____ to the university?

- ☐ go
- ☐ reach
- ☐ find
- ☐ get

19. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are
_____.

- ☐ food
- ☐ meals
- ☐ foodtimes
- ☐ eatings

20. Every time I wear something white, I
_____ coffee or orange juice or
something on it.

- ☐ spill
- ☐ drop
- ☐ let
- ☐ pour

21. It's a good idea, but it's _____
that the boss will agree with you.

- ☐ likely
- ☐ unprobably
- ☐ improbably
- ☐ unlikely

22. Are you planning to go _____
for the weekend?

- ☐ far
- ☐ off
- ☐ out
- ☐ away

23. Excuse me, I think you've
_____ a mistake in our bill.

- ☐ made
- ☐ had
- ☐ done
- ☐ given

24. He's so _____! I'm not
_____ in anything he says.

- ☐ boring ... interesting
- ☐ boring ... interested
- ☐ bored ... interesting
- ☐ bored ... interested

25. Do you live in a house or
_____?

- ☐ an apartment
- ☐ a village
- ☐ a home
- ☐ a building

26. I've got all the data. Now I just need to _____ the answer.

- ☐ make out
- ☐ count out
- ☐ think out
- ☐ work out

27. I love all fruit, but _____ strawberries.

- ☐ especially
- ☐ mostly
- ☐ specifically
- ☐ specially

28. What size do you need: small, medium or _____?

- ☐ big
- ☐ huge
- ☐ giant
- ☐ large

29. He's a waiter; she's a _____.

- ☐ waiter
- ☐ waitree

- ☐ waitress
- ☐ waitress

30. Let's go to a restaurant for dinner tonight = Let's _____ tonight.

- ☐ eat out
- ☐ eat away
- ☐ eat outwardly
- ☐ eat outside

31. I've been so busy all week. I don't want to do anything at the weekend – I'll just stay at home and _____.

- ☐ have a relax
- ☐ make a rest
- ☐ make it easy
- ☐ take it easy

32. It's the _____ building in the city.

- ☐ greatest
- ☐ highest
- ☐ fattest
- ☐ tallest

33. You can't smoke here – please _____ your cigarette.

- ☐ put out
- ☐ put down
- ☐ put away
- ☐ put up with

34. He studies maths at university. He's a _____.

- ☐ studier
- ☐ pupil
- ☐ professor
- ☐ student

35. I don't like my job very much. I'm going to _____ and look for another one.

- ☐ retire
- ☐ fire
- ☐ finish
- ☐ resign

36. 'Happy' is the _____ of 'sad'.

- ☐ oppose
- ☐ opposite
- ☐ opposed
- ☐ oppositive

37. imagine → imaginative

rely → reliable

ambition → _____

- ☐ ambitiative
- ☐ ambitionful
- ☐ ambitiable
- ☐ ambitious

38. If I were you, I'd leave earlier, so you can avoid the _____.

- ☐ peak hour
- ☐ rush hour
- ☐ peak time
- ☐ traffic time

39. The weather was great – it was really _____.

- ☐ sunshine
- ☐ strong sun
- ☐ sun
- ☐ sunny

40. Her hair isn't completely straight – it's slightly _____.

- ☐ wavy
- ☐ waved
- ☐ bent
- ☐ curl

Appendix 5: The Grammar Proficiency Test

1. How long have they _____ there?
 - ☐ been waited
 - ☐ waiting
 - ☐ waited
 - ☐ been waiting
2. If I had more time, I _____ do more exercise.
 - ☐ would
 - ☐ 'm going to
 - ☐ want to
 - ☐ will
3. He drives quite _____, but his brother drives really _____.
 - ☐ slowly ... fast
 - ☐ slowly ... fastly
 - ☐ slow ... fast
 - ☐ slow ... fastly
4. Where _____ he work?
 - ☐ is
 - ☐ does
 - ☐ do
 - ☐ don't
5. The film _____ by Quentin Tarantino.
 - ☐ was directed
 - ☐ directed
 - ☐ was direct
 - ☐ did directed
6. It was the first time he _____ anything so spicy.
 - ☐ had been eating
 - ☐ has eaten
 - ☐ was eating
 - ☐ had eaten
7. She's from _____, so she speaks _____.
 - ☐ Spain ... Spanish
 - ☐ Spanish ... Spain
 - ☐ Spain ... Spainese
 - ☐ Spanish ... Spanish
8. She _____ in a small house near the park.
 - ☐ stays
 - ☐ living
 - ☐ live
 - ☐ lives

9. That smells good! What _____.
- ☐ are you cook?
 - ☐ do you cook?
 - ☐ do you cooking?
 - ☐ are you cooking?

10. She's wearing a _____ dress.
- ☐ beautiful long black
 - ☐ black long beautiful
 - ☐ long black beautiful
 - ☐ long beautiful black

11. Let's go to the cinema.

- Great idea! What film _____ we watch?
- ☐ will
 - ☐ shall
 - ☐ do
 - ☐ are we going to

12. Where _____ they from?
- ☐ isn't
 - ☐ is
 - ☐ am
 - ☐ are

13. I'm busy on Friday, so I _____ come.

- ☐ am not
- ☐ not can
- ☐ can't
- ☐ don't

14. Take a sandwich with you _____ you get hungry later.

- ☐ in case
- ☐ when
- ☐ if
- ☐ so as not to

15. She _____ have short hair, but now it's long.

- ☐ before
- ☐ used to
- ☐ didn't
- ☐ use to

16. I drink coffee _____.

- ☐ twice a day
- ☐ twice in day
- ☐ two times day
- ☐ two times for a day

17. I _____ to Germany last year.

- ☐ go
- ☐ goed
- ☐ went
- ☐ gone

18. Put _____ bag on _____ table, then give me _____ apple and _____ bar of chocolate.
- ☐ the ... the ... an ... a
 - ☐ a ... a ... the ... the
 - ☐ the ... the ... a ... a
 - ☐ a ... the ... an ... the
19. I _____ been hit by a car, but luckily I just managed to get out of the way.
- ☐ could have
 - ☐ must have
 - ☐ should have
 - ☐ can have
20. I spend too much time _____. I'd like _____ more time for myself and my family.
- ☐ to work ... having
 - ☐ working ... having
 - ☐ working ... to have
 - ☐ to work ... to have
21. I was _____ exhausted by the end of the day.
- ☐ incredibly
 - ☐ completely
 - ☐ extremely
22. I don't know where she is. I suppose she _____ got stuck in traffic.
- ☐ very
 - ☐ must have
 - ☐ can have
 - ☐ should have
 - ☐ might have
23. Whose bag is this?
- It's _____.
- ☐ my
 - ☐ of me
 - ☐ mine
 - ☐ the mine
24. That wasn't a good idea – you _____ thought about it more carefully.
- ☐ must have
 - ☐ should have
 - ☐ ought have
 - ☐ have to
25. How did this _____ broken?
- ☐ get
 - ☐ was
 - ☐ become
 - ☐ be

26. I'd love to _____ in the 19th century.
- ☐ have been lived
 - ☐ lived
 - ☐ have lived
 - ☐ live
27. I _____ like getting up early.
- ☐ am not
 - ☐ doesn't
 - ☐ don't
 - ☐ not
28. I wouldn't say that to him if I _____ you.
- ☐ would be
 - ☐ am
 - ☐ was
 - ☐ were
29. Could you tell me _____?
- ☐ the bus stop is where
 - ☐ where the bus stop is
 - ☐ where is the bus stop
 - ☐ is where the bus stop
30. I'll send it to you _____ I get the money.

- ☐ in case
 - ☐ as soon as
 - ☐ unless
 - ☐ until
31. Winters here _____ be really cold sometimes, so make sure you bring warm clothes!
- ☐ might
 - ☐ may
 - ☐ can
 - ☐ could
32. He _____ ever works as _____ as he should.
- ☐ hardly ... hardly
 - ☐ hardly ... hard
 - ☐ hard ... hard
 - ☐ hard ... hardly
33. Do you think it's _____ rain tomorrow?
- ☐ to
 - ☐ going
 - ☐ going to
 - ☐ will
34. But they _____ be away – I saw them this morning!
- ☐ mustn't

- ☐ can't
- ☐ shouldn't
- ☐ don't have to

- ☐ wouldn't be
- ☐ won't be

35. If he _____ one minute later, he _____ the train.

- ☐ would have arrived ... would have missed
- ☐ would arrive ... would miss
- ☐ arrived ... would have missed
- ☐ had arrived ... would have missed

36. This house is _____, but also _____.

- ☐ more big ... more expensive
- ☐ bigger ... more expensive
- ☐ bigger ... expensiver
- ☐ more big ... expensiver

37. I wish he _____ so rude to people when we go out.

- ☐ didn't be
- ☐ hadn't been

38. I've already called her four times _____.

- ☐ before
- ☐ yesterday
- ☐ today
- ☐ again

39. By next month I _____ all my exams, and I can relax!

- ☐ will be finishing
- ☐ will have been finishing
- ☐ will have finished
- ☐ will finish

40. _____ spent time abroad when I was a student, I found it easier to get used to _____ in another country.

- ☐ Have ... live
- ☐ Having ... living
- ☐ To have ... living
- ☐ Having ... live

Appendix 6: The Spelling Proficiency Test/ The Dictated Words

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1) Accelerate | 21) Laboratory |
| 2) Accessible | 22) Medieval |
| 3) Accessory | 23) Noticeable |
| 4) Accommodate | 24) Occasion |
| 5) Acknowledge | 25) Occurrence |
| 6) Acquire | 26) Parallel |
| 7) Aggressive | 27) Parliament |
| 8) Amphitheater | 28) Perseverance |
| 9) Anecdote | 29) Persuade |
| 10) Apparent | 30) Phenomenon |
| 11) Category | 31) Privilege |
| 12) Committee | 32) Pursue |
| 13) Consensus | 33) Receive |
| 14) Curriculum | 34) Seize |
| 15) Deceive | 35) Separate |
| 16) Exaggerate | 36) Subtle |
| 17) Government | 37) Threshold |
| 18) Guarantee | 38) Tragedy |
| 19) Harass | 39) Vague |
| 20) Hypocrisy | 40) Weird |

Appendix 7: Teachers' Semi-structured Questionnaire
Investigating English as a foreign Language Learners' Commonest Challenge among
Vocabulary, Spelling, and Grammar when Developing their Written Productions: The Case
of Third Year Students at Biskra University

The aim of this study is to highlight the one aspect of writing—vocabulary, grammar, or spelling—that presents the greatest challenge for students. Specifically, it seeks to enhance both students' and teachers' understanding of specific areas requiring targeted improvement, encourage further research to refine and advance pedagogical approaches to teaching writing, and raise awareness of the foundational role that writing skills play in academic development and success. To achieve these objectives, the research is guided by three research questions:

- What forms the biggest challenge for EFL students while writing (vocabulary, grammar, or spelling)?
- How do teachers perceive the relative importance of vocabulary, grammar, and spelling in writing instruction?
- What do teachers think students lack most among vocabulary, grammar, and spelling?

The teacher's questionnaire aims to answer the second and third questions, which will provide a first-hand experience that would serve the research and add needed expert perspectives.

Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in this study. This questionnaire is part of a research investigating the most common challenges faced by third-year EFL learners at Biskra University in their writing skills, specifically among the three aspects: vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. Your responses will contribute to identifying key areas for improvement.

Instructions:

Please answer all questions. For closed-ended questions, select the most appropriate option. For open-ended questions, feel free to elaborate on your answer.

Section 1: Background Information

1. How many years have you been teaching EFL?
 - Less than 2 years
 - 2–5 years
 - 6–10 years
 - More than 10 years
2. Have you taught EFL third-year University students at Biskra University?
 - Yes
 - No
 - If yes, how many years?
3. What is your current teaching position?
 - Full-time
 - Part-time
 - Temporary/Contract-based
 - Other positions:
4. How many years have you been teaching/ have taught writing-related modules (e.g., Written Expression, Academic Writing)?
 - Less than 2 years
 - 2–5 years

- 6–10 years
- More than 10 years

Section 2: Perceptions of Writing Challenges

5. How do you perceive the relative importance of vocabulary, grammar, and spelling in writing instruction?
- Vocabulary is the most important aspect.
 - Grammar is the most important aspect.
 - Spelling is the most important aspect.
 - All three are equally important.

Please, explain why you have chosen this option and how it has affected your teaching:

.....

.....

.....

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.....

.....

6. Which aspect of writing do you think students struggle with the most?
- Vocabulary
 - Grammar
 - Spelling
 - All of the above

Why? Please, provide your justification:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

7. To what extent do you think these challenges impact students' overall writing performance?
- Very significantly
 - Somewhat significantly
 - Slightly
 - Not at all

Please, justify your answer:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

8. What do you think are the primary causes of these challenges? (Select all that apply)
- Lack of practice
 - Ineffective teaching methods
 - Insufficient resources
 - Other causes:.....
.....
.....

Section 3: Teaching Practices and Curriculum

9. How often do you explicitly teach the following aspects during writing lessons?
- Vocabulary:
 - Always
 - Often
 - Rarely
 - Never
 - Grammar:

- Always
- Often
- Rarely
- Never

○ Spelling:

- Always
- Often
- Rarely
- Never

10. How well do you think the current curriculum supports the development of vocabulary, grammar, and spelling?

- Extremely well
- Very well
- Moderately well
- Slightly well
- Not well at all

Please, justify your answer:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

11. Which teaching strategies do you find most effective in order to improve each of the following?

- Vocabulary:.....
-
-

- Grammar:.....
.....
.....
- Spelling:.....
.....
.....

Section 4: Recommendations and Insights

12. What changes would you recommend to improve students' writing skills regarding
vocabulary, grammar, or spelling?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

13. Is there anything else you would like to share about the challenges faced by EFL
learners in writing or your experience addressing these challenges?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Appendix 8: The Sample's Spellings: Transcribed

S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Accselerate	Accilurate	Exlorit	Exalurate	Exelarate
Exessble	Accesible	Exasiable	Exasible	Accasebale
Axecery	Accecery	Exaseri	Excessery	Accasory
Acomidate	Acomedate	Arcurmadate	Acomedate	Acomadate
Aknowledge	Aknowledge	Knowlege	Aknowledge	Aknowledge
Acquire	Acquire	Ecuare	Acquiure	Accuire
Agressive	Agressive	Agessing	Adressed	Agresive
Amphi Theatear	Amphi Theature	Anphi Fututure	Omphi Theature	Amphi Theature
Anecdote	Aniqudoute	Anyclute	Anecdote	Anicdote
Aparent	Apairante	Aperent	Aperent	Aparent
Category	Categorie	Catigree	Categorie	Categorie
Cometee	Comety	Cumity	Comety	Comity
Consenses	Cancenses	Cunssess	Consenses	Consences
Cureculam	Ceriquelim	Curiclam	Curruculum	Coriculum
Desive	Dessive	Desive	Decive	Desive
Egsagerate	Exagerate	Exlurate	Exagerate	Agsajorate
Government	Gaverment	Geverment	Govenment	Goverment
Garantee	Garantie	Geranty	Geranty	Garanty
Harass	Harace	Haruss	Haras	Herrase
Haipocrossy	Hepocercy	Hipophise	Hepokrici	Hypocracy
Laboratory	Laboratory	Lapuratury	Lapporatury	Laboratory
Medeavel	Medieval	Medivule	Medeval	Medeivel
Noteceble	Noticeble	Notesibale	Notesebale	Notessable
Ocason	Aucasion	Ooucussing	Auquassion	Occation
Accorance	Aucarance	Occerms	Acqurants	Occorance
Paralel	Parallele	Parulal	Parulal	Parralel
Parliament	Parlement	Parlimant	Parlement	Parlimant
Perseverance	Percivirance	Persiviranse	Perciverance	Persivirant
Perseade	Persuade	Persude	Poursuide	Persiuade
Phenomenan	Phonomenon	Phenomene	Phenomenon	Phenomenan
Privilage	Prevlage	Preflege	Prevlage	Priviledge
Persue	Percu	Perswe	Porcou	Persou
Recieve	Recieve	Resive	Resive	Risive
Ceeze	Cieze	Size	Seege	Seez
Seperate	Ceperate	Sapurate	Seperate	Separate
Suttle	Satele	Satule	Sattle	Sattle
Threasheholde	Threshold	Therahulde	Threachhoold	Thresh-Hoold
Tragedy	Tragedy	Tragede	Tragedi	Trajedy
Vage	Vague	Vaig	Vage	Fage
Weirde	Weared	Werd	Wird	Weard

EFL LEARNERS' WRITING CHALLENGES: VOCABULARY, GRAMMAR, AND SPELLING

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S6	S7	S8	S9	S10
Exelerate	Exalerate	Exalorate	Accalerate	Accelurate
Accessable	Access	Execeble	Accessable	Accesible
Accessory	Exacerry	Axecory	Accessory	Accessory
Accomedate	Acomadiate	Acomidiate	Acomudate	Acumedate
Aknowledge	Acknowledge	Acknowledge	Ackdknowledge	Acknowldge
Aquire	Aquire	Acquire	Acquire	Acwayer
Agressive	Agressive	Agressive	Agressive	Agressive
Amphi Theature	Amphitheater	Emphitheatre	Amhpi Theatre	Amphitheater
Anickdote	Anicdoit	Aniqdote	Ancdote	Anecdote
Apparent	Aparent	Aparent	Apparent	Apparent
Catiggory	Category	Categorie	Category	Category
Commitie	Comitty	Commuty	Commitee	Commiteu
Concensess	Concenses	Censensese	Consescs	Concencess
Curriculum	Corecilam	(Blank)	Curriclum	Curecilum
Dessieve	Dicive	Decive	Decieve	Decieve
Exadurate	Exagerait	Exagorite	Exaggerate	Exaggerate
Gouvernement	Government	Government	Goverment	Govrenment
Garantee	Garenti	Garenty	Garante	Guarentee
Harrass	Harass	Herus	Harass	Harass
Hypocracy	Hypocracy	Hepocrecy	Hypocracy	Hypocrecy
Laboratory	Laboratory	Laboratory	Laboratory	Laboratory
Medival	Medival	Mediveal	Medival	Medival
Noticable	Noticibale	Noticeable	Noticeble	Noticable
Occasion	Occusion	Occassion	Occassion	Occosion
Occurance	Occurent	Accurence	Occurance	Occurence
Paralell	Parallel	Parallel	Parallel	Parallel
Parliament	Parlement	Parliment	Parilement	Parelement
Perseverence	Persiverence	Percevirence	Perseverance	Perssever
Persuade	Persouade	Persuade	Persuade	Persuade
Phenomenon	Phenominan	Phenomen	Phenomenon	Phonomenon
Privilage	Prefledge	Prevelige	Privelege	Preiveledge
Persue	Perssou	Persue	Presue	Persue
Recieve	Resive	Recieve	Recieve	Recieve
Seize	Sees	Sizze	Seize	Seize
Seperate	Seperait	Superate	Seperate	Separate
Subtle	Settel	Suttle	Sutdle	Suttle
Threshholde	Freachhold	Threchhold	Threshold	Theshhold
Tragedy	Tragedy	Trajedy	Tragedy	Tragedy
Vague	Vaige	Vage	Vague	Vague
Weird	Weird	Weird	Weird	Weird

EFL LEARNERS' WRITING CHALLENGES: VOCABULARY, GRAMMAR, AND SPELLING

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S11	S12	S13	S14	S15
Exalurate	Acculurate	Exalerate	Exelerite	Exellerite
Accessable	Accessable	Accesible	Accessible	Accessible
Accessary	Acceory	Exesery	Exesury	Axesury
Acomodate	Acomodate	Accoulidate	Accolidate	Acamodate
Aknowledge	Acknowledge	Aknolge	Aknoledge	Acknowledge
Acquire	Acquire	Acuire	Accuire	Acquire
Aggressive	Agresive	Agressive	Agressive	Agressive
Emphi Theatre	Amphi Theatre	Amfithear	Amphitheater	Amphiefeature
Anecdote	Anecdote	Anikdote	Anikdote	Aniqudote
Apparent	Apparent	Apperent	Appearant	Appearant
Category	Cateory	Catigory	Categorie	Category
Commity	Commity	Cuimtie	Cumitie	Qimitie
Consensis	Consensese	Couneuses	Consensis	Qensincise
Curriculum	Curriculum	Corriculum	Corriculum	Quricilare
Decieve	Desiave	Desive	Dessive	Dissive
Exaggerate	Exaggerate	Exagerate	Exagurate	Exagirate
Governement	Government	Govement	Goverment	Goverment
Garanttee	Guarantee	Guarantie	Guarantie	Garantie
Herrase	Harras	Horas	Harras	Harass
Hypocresy	Hyporacy	Epocrosy	Hipocrassie	Hypocrisy
Laboratory	Laboratory	Laboratory	Laboratie	Laboratory
Medival	Medievle	Medivel	Midevil	Medival
Noticable	Noticabl	Noticeable	Noticeable	Noticibale
Occasion	Occasion	Okeytion	Occasion	(Blank)
Accurance	Occurance	Occerence	Occurense	Accuranse
Parallel	Parallel	Paralal	Parallal	(Blank)
Parliment	Parliment	Perlement	Parlament	Parlement
Pursiverance	Percevierance	Persevirence	Persevirence	Perseverance
Persuade	Persuade	Poursuide	Persweid	Purcuide
Phenomenon	Phenomenon	Phonomenon	Phenomenon	Phenominal
Previlage	Prievlege	Prevledge	Privilidge	Prevelage
Persue	Persue	Persou	Precsue	Persuie
Recieve	Recieve	Recive	Recive	Recieve
Ceize	Seeze	Size	Sease	Sease
Seperate	Separate	Seperate	Separate	Saperate
Settle	Settle	Suttel	Suttle	Suttle
Threshold	Thrach Hold	Thrachhold	Thresholde	Thrashhold
Tragedy	Tragedy	Trajedit	Tragidie	Tragidy
Vague	Vage	Vague	Vague	Vage
Weird	Wied	Weard	Weird	Weard

EFL LEARNERS' WRITING CHALLENGES: VOCABULARY, GRAMMAR, AND SPELLING

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S16	S17	S18	S19	S20
Acseclerate	Excellerate	Excalurate	Exallurate	(Blank)
Accessable	Excesseble	Accessable	Exessible	Accesseble
Accessery	Eccessery	Accessory	Exessury	Accessery
Acamodate	Accomodate	Acomodate	Accomodate	Acomodate
(Blank)	Acknowledge	Acknowledge	Acknowledge	Acknowledge
Aquire	Aquire	Aquire	Acquire	Aquire
Agressive	Aggressive	Agressive	Agressive	Addressive
Amphitheater	Amphi Theatre	Amphitheature	Amphitheature	(Blank)
Anicdote	Ankdote	Ankdot	Anechdoate	Aneckdote
Aparent	Apparent	Apparent	Aparent	Aparent
Catigory	Category	Categorie	Category	Categorie
Comeety	Commette	Commuty	Commety	Commietie
Consences	Consensise	Consenses	Concensis	Concensis
Quericulum	(Blank)	Curriculum	Correcolame	Corequilem
Desive	Deceive	Dessive	Dessive	Desive
Egsagrate	Exagerite	Exagerate	Axagerate	Egzagerate
Goverment	Government	Goverment	Government	Goverment
Garantie	Garenty	Garentie	Garenty	Garantie
Harrass	Harras	Harass	Harrase	Heras
Hipocrisy	Hepocrisy	Hypocrissie	Hypocrassy	Hepockercie
Laboratore	Laboratory	Laboratory	Laboratory	Laboratory
Mediavle	Medival	Medevle	Medevle	Medieval
Noticable	Notecable	Noticable	Noticebale	Notesible
Ocassion	Occasion	Occassion	Occasion	Occassion
Ocurence	Occorance	(Blank)	Occurance	(Blank)
Parallele	Parallel	Paralele	Peralal	Parallale
Parliment	Parlemant	Parliment	Parlement	Parlement
Perciverence	Perseverance	Perciverence	Percivirance	Persevierance
Persuade	Persuade	Pourcwide	Persuade	Persuade
Phenomenan	Phenomenon	Phenomenon	Phenomenon	Fenomenon
Prevelage	Prevlaige	Privledge	Prevledge	(Blank)
Persue	Persue	Pourcew	Persue	Persue
Recieve	Receive	Receive	Receive	Resieve
Sease	Seise	Sees	Seeze	Seeze
Ceperate	Separate	Saperate	Separate	Sapurate
Settle	Settle	Satlle	Sattle	Sutal
Threshold	Threashhold	Freshhold	Threchhoald	Threshold
Tragedy	Tragedy	Tragedy	Tragedy	Tragidy
Vague	Vage	Vig	Vage	Vague
Weird	Weird	Weird	Weard	Weird

EFL LEARNERS' WRITING CHALLENGES: VOCABULARY, GRAMMAR, AND SPELLING

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S21	S22	S23	S24	S25
Exalurate	Exalurate	Exalurate	Accslurate	Exalurate
Accussible	Exasible	Excesable	Accesable	Accessable
Axacury	Exasury	Excessory	Accessery	Accessory
Acommodate	Accumudate	Acomodate	Accomodate	Accomdate
Acknowledge	Aknowledge	Awknowledge	Aknowledge	Aknowledge
Accware	Acquire	Acquire	Aquire	Acquire
Aggressive	Egressive	Aggressive	Agrassive	Aggressive
Omphythere	Unfitheature	Emphytheater	Amphitheature	Emphitheatre
Aneckdote	Anicdote	Anecdote	Anickdout	Aneckdote
Apparent	Aperent	Aparent	Aparent	Aparent
Cattegory	Category	Category	Category	Category
Commety	Comity	Commity	Commity	Commety
Consences	Consunsise	Consences	Concensis	Concenss
Curreculeme	Corucilum	Curriculum	Coricilem	Corecelelem
Decive	Disive	Dessive	Dicive	Dessive
Egsadurate	Exturate	Exagerate	Exagorate	Exagerate
Government	Government	Gorevnment	Goverment	Government
Garante	Garenty	Garentee	Garanty	Garanty
Herase	Hurase	Harrase	Herase	Herrass
Hypocrasy	Hypocracy	Hypocracy	Hypocrcy	Hypocracy
Laboratory	Laborury	Laboratory	Labolatory	Laboratory
Mideval	Medivul	Mideivel	Medivel	Medieval
Noticible	Knowteseble	Noticeable	Noticeble	Noticable
Acuasiane	Occation	Aucasion	Occasion	Occassion
Ecuranse	Occurance	Accurence	Occurence	Occurance
Parallele	Parulal	Parallel	Parellal	Paralel
Parlliment	Parliament	Parliment	Parellement	Parliment
Percivirence	Pursivirence	Persivierence	Perciverence	Percevirance
Persuade	Persuate	Parsuad	Persuide	Persuade
Phenominene	Phenomenant	Phenomenon	Phenomenon	Phenomenon
Prevldige	Prevlege	Privilage	Priveledge	Preveladge
Purse	Purse	Persue	Percude	Persue
Recive	Recieve	Recieve	Recive	Recieve
Seece	Sees	Sies	Size	Seise
Sapurate	Seperate	Saperate	Sapperate	Saperate
Sattle	Satel	Settle	Sattle	Setale
Thruch-Holde	Thrushhold	Threshold	Theshhoold	Threshold
Tragedy	Trujudy	Tragidy	Tragidy	Tradedy
Vage	Vage	Vague	Vage	Vague
Wird	Weird	Weird	Wirde	Weired

EFL LEARNERS' WRITING CHALLENGES: VOCABULARY, GRAMMAR, AND SPELLING

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S26	S27	S28	S29	S30
Exelerate	Acsalorate	Exlorate	Exalurate	Eccalurate
Accable	Exsasival	Accesable	Accesable	Axcesable
Ecesary	Exsasory	Acceceire	Accesorie	(Blank)
Akomedate	Acoumdate	Acommedat	Acomodate	Acammdate
Aknowledge	Aknowldge	Akhnowlede	Acknowledge	Aknowladge
Acquire	Acquire	Aquire	Acquire	Aquire
Agressive	Egressive	Agrassiv	Agressive	Agrasive
Amphitheater	Emphy Theature	Amphetheerer	Amphi Theater	Omfeetheotre
Anecdote	Ankdowte	Anqdot	An Ecdote	Ancdote
Aperent	Aparent	Aprent	A Parent	Apparente
Category	Category	Katiguere	Category	Categorie
Commity	Comety	Qmete	Comitte	Qumité
Consenses	Consensis	Censencces	Consenses	Cuinsencese
Correculm	Coreculam	Kericilame	Curiqulem	Qriquleme
Deseave	Dessiv	Dessive	Diseve	Deccive
Exaggerate	Exagerate	Exagerate	Exagerate	Exagurate
Gouvernement	Gevernment	Goverment	Goverment	Gvremente
Garenty	Garanty	Grantte	Garente	Guarenté
Harras	Harrase	Hrass	Herase	Harasse
Hypocrisy	Hyphocrassy	Hypocrase	Hepoqracy	Hypocrice
Laboratory	Laboratory	Laporate	Laboratory	Laburatore
Midevil	Medieval	Medivel	Medival	Midivill
Noticable	Notesable	Notesiblle	Noticable	Noticable
Occuasion	Ocasion	Ocagsion	Occasion	Occasion
Occurance	Accorant	Aquerunse	Oquerence	Accurance
Parallel	Peralal	Parlale	Parellel	Parellele
Parliament	Paliment	Parlement	Parliment	Parllement
Percivrence	Persiverans	Persiverense	Persivrence	Persevirence
Persuade	Persioud	Persuide	Persuade	Persuade
Phenomenon	Phenomenen	Phenomena	Phenomena	Phénoméne
Prevelage	Preveledge	Prevelge	Prevledge	Prevelige
Persue	Persue	Presue	Pursue	Persue
Receive	Recive	Resive	Recive	Recive
Ceese	Seez	Cise	Cise	Sciese
Separate	Seperate	Saberate	Separte	Seprate
Settle	Settle	Sttule	Sattle	Septle
Threashhold	Threshood	Thrashholde	Thrushhold	Threshold
Tragedy	Tradgdy	Tradjede	Tragedy	Tragidé
Vaige	Vague	Vage	Vage	Vague
Weird	Wared	(Blank)	Wired	Wierd

Appendix 9: The Opinionnaire of the Questionnaire

OPINIONNAIRE

1- Are there any repetitive questions?

Yes ☐

No ☐

- If yes, please specify them.

.....
.....
.....

2- Did you find any grammar / spelling mistakes in the questions?

Yes ☐

No ☐

-If yes, please notify them below.

.....
.....
.....

3- Are there any irrelevant questions that need to be removed?

Yes ☐

No ☐

-If yes, please provide the number of the question(s) below.

.....

4- Is the questionnaire of reasonable length?

Yes ☐

No ☐

5- Are there any ambiguous questions that need to be reformulated and / or clarified?

Yes ☐

No ☐

-If yes, please indicate which questions require rewording.

.....
.....

6- What do you think of the layout?

.....
.....
.....

7- Are the response categories appropriate?

Yes ☐

No ☐

8- If there are any questions that you believe are of close relevance to the purpose of the questionnaire but were not included, please write them below.

.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you very much for your time and collaboration

Appendix 10: The Validation Form of the Questionnaire

Questionnaire Validation Form

I hereby certify that I have read the students' questionnaire in the study carried out by Ines DIDICHE who is currently working on her MA dissertation at Biskra University. I have provided the researcher of the present study with remarks and comments regarding both the layout and the contents of the questionnaire.

Background Information on the Expert:

Name:.....

University:.....

Present Occupation:.....

Degree:.....

Telephone Number:.....

Email Address:.....

Signed:.....

Researcher Contact Details:

Ines Didiche

Email: inesdidiche@gmail.com

Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra

Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages

Department of English Language and Literature

Appendix 11: Teachers' Responses (Transcribed)

T1	T2	T3
More than 10 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years
Yes, 10 years	Yes, Six years	Yes, 5 years
Full-time	Full-time	Full-time
More than 10 years	Less than two years	2–5 years
<p>All three are equally important: An effective piece of writing needs three aspects. Relevant vocabulary and correct grammar and spelling are vital elements when writing. They constitute the form. The content of any piece of writing cannot be effective if the form is not.</p>	<p>All three are equally important: I do believe that all of these aspects are of a great importance. Having a lack in vocabulary would push the learner to keep using the same words (redundancy and unnecessary repetition), while deficiency and grammar would mess up the whole writing.</p>	<p>All three are equally important: Students must choose relevant vocabulary to explain and explore the subject matter appropriately academically speaking; for achieving that, grammar and spelling should be adequate, not necessarily one hundred per cent correct, but at least avoiding errors that may mislead readers, or alter meaning is required.</p>
<p>All of the above: Most students do not like writing because they are short of relevant vocabulary which is due to lack of reading. Besides, being able to fix their grammar and spelling mistakes is another challenge for their writing proficiency.</p>	<p>Vocabulary: Because most of them do not read to acquire, learn new vocabulary, and they do not get exposed to English frequently.</p>	<p>Grammar: Students struggle with all three aspects, but they face difficulties with grammar the most. We usually find students who have good ideas, and good words to share those ideas, but when it comes to putting them into a grammatical frame, they stutter and commit errors that hinder them from completing the idea or explaining it in the first place.</p>

Very significantly: As mentioned previously, most students are able to research their writing productions, but when it comes to write about their findings, they find many difficulties concerning the form.	Very significantly: Grammar, vocabulary and spelling are the basic aspects of the writing skill. Any problems in them would definitely significantly affect the writing skill.	Very significantly: If the piece of writing is full of grammatical errors, this will blur the original meaning of the text and make it too ambiguous to understand, in addition, it will cause the text to sound not so good and the student to look not so in control of his ideas.
Lack of practice Other causes: lack of reading and serious engagement in the writing process	Lack of practice	Lack of practice
Vocabulary: Rarely Grammar: Rarely Spelling: Rarely	Vocabulary: Often Grammar: Often Spelling: Often	Vocabulary: Often Grammar: Often Spelling: Rarely
Moderately well: Most teachers put emphasis on the content rather than the form. These three aspects are taught during the two first years. Then, they are completely neglected by learners. In academic writing, I usually ask my learners to revise these previous lessons because they are part of the writing process.	Moderately well: Maybe the main problem is lack of practice which can be due to the small amount of time devoted to writing sessions.	Moderately well: It needs to integrate more reading tasks and use in- class guided writing activities.

<p>Vocabulary: Read more and more. Create their own dictionary.</p> <p>Grammar: Revise the needed lessons.</p> <p>Spelling: Using dictation as an activity.</p>	<p>Vocabulary: Modeling Method (in which students can have the ability to read well written texts and learn new vocabulary)</p> <p>Grammar: Storytelling (which can help students in grammar, spelling and vocabulary)</p> <p>Spelling: Modeling Method.</p>	<p>Vocabulary: reading texts for comprehension and speaking using topic-based tasks.</p> <p>Grammar: in -class writing tasks that need to be guided and supervised.</p> <p>Spelling: Reading and writing tasks automatically improve spelling.</p>
<p>When taught these three aspects, learners are not made aware of their importance when writing their dissertation or any research paper. Teachers should explain to learners the long-term goals of such lessons and their impact on their writing productions. These aspects should be taught in parallel with written expression and academic writing modules. More reinforcement and consolidation are needed.</p>	<p>"You can take the horse to the river but you cannot make him drink".</p> <p>Despite the fact of the small number of sessions devoted for writing (lack of practice), most students do not care to improve their writing.</p>	<p>Improving reading habits will help a lot, in addition to implementing in-class reading and writing tasks where students are deprived from using any source of technology and rely on their personal skills.</p>
<p>A detailed lecture on proofreading is recommended for such challenges.</p> <p>Learners must be taught how and when to proofread their writing pieces. Such practice may help them overcome these difficulties.</p>	No	No

T4	T5	T6
More than 10 years	More than 10 years	2–5 years
Yes, 1 year	Yes, 8 years	No
Full-time	Full-time	Full-time
More than 10 years	6–10 years	2–5 years
<p>All three are equally important: As language is a complementary structure that combines the three components, it is of paramount importance to emphasize them equally in the teaching process.</p> <p>Any focus of one of them at the expense of the other two elements will yield, at the long term, severe disturbance in that linguistic balance, reflecting deficiency in his language.</p>	<p>All three are equally important: Writing is a package that involves many skills and competencies related to language proficiency, creativity and character. As a teacher, students must give equal attention to the aforementioned aspects as they all contribute to effective writing.</p>	<p>All three are equally important: I consider the three aspects as complementary to one another. The presence of the three aspects lead to an acceptable piece of writing and if done perfectly, it will be an excellent written production. I fairly include and focus on all of them while teaching writing (paragraphs and essays) to my students.</p>
<p>All of the above: 1. Because of lack of reading- lack of practice- excessive reliance on audio-visual informal material to develop their language- the negative influence of chatting with symbolic contractions in social media-</p>	<p>Vocabulary: Though students' struggles in writing are distinct and reflect each individual experience and exposure, I frequently notice that vocabulary and word choice often block students' writing flow. Their lexical knowledge and lexical competence stand against their</p>	<p>All of the above: Based on my experience observing my students' written productions, I found that they struggle with all these aspects. Some of them struggles with one or two of them, but a huge category face problems with the three. They do not master grammar rules, they do not know a lot of</p>

	<p>vocabulary shortage in writing. They lack words and their meanings, collocations and combinations.</p>	<p>vocabulary...etc. it's all due to both lack of knowledge and practice.</p>
<p>Very significantly: When the sources of acquisition are non-academic and non-authentic, the amount of language deficiency rises.</p>	<p>Very significantly: The vocabulary shortage affects enormously students' overall writing production. Expressing different and complex ideas needs a wide range of lexicon, including jargon, terminology, neologism, and disciplines-related lexis. Many students ended up writing poor compositions with limited vocabulary due to their lack of word knowledge.</p>	<p>Very significantly: Their productions will always lack something and it wouldn't be a perfect one.</p>

<p>lack of practice</p> <p>Other causes: lack of reading, excessive reliance on audio-visual informal material to develop their language the negative influence of chatting with symbolic contractions in social media</p>	<p>Lack of practice</p>	<p>Lack of practice</p> <p>Ineffective teaching methods</p> <p>Other causes: The syllabus which needs, sometimes, more higher abilities on the part of students but the fact is not. For example: the case of 2nd year students struggling with essay writing because they are still in need to practice more about paragraph writing. This is due to the new CANEVA</p> <p>The huge number of students per class which does not allow the teacher to give feedback to all, especially when it comes to writing, the nature of the course needs form the teacher to check all the student's writings and correct them which is time consuming. Thus, if teachers struggle with that, those challenges will remain or will be difficult to get rid of them.</p> <p>Another reason may be way teachers do the evaluation which must be a detailed one correcting all those aspects in writing. In some cases, teachers opt for a global evaluation which is not efficient at all and it doesn't help students to know their mistakes/errors and correct them.</p>
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Vocabulary: Never Grammar: Never Spelling: Never	Vocabulary: Often Grammar: Rarely Spelling: Rarely	Vocabulary: Always Grammar: Always Spelling: Always
Moderately well: There must be complementary cooperation between what is taught in the syllabus and the further personal practice on the student's own to develop his level of writing.	Moderately well: The current curriculum does not focus on explicit instruction of these aspects. It focuses on aspects of writing as a process and as a product (elements of essay, methods of development), taking into consideration aspects of grammar, spelling and vocabulary as pre-requisites.	Moderately well: The focus is much more on writing and sentence errors related to writing (writing errors). Only sometimes, some common elements are related to the three aspects that's why I can say it's a moderate one.
Vocabulary: I use genre approach (imitation) then I move to the process approach (creation). Grammar: I use genre approach (imitation) then I move to the process approach (creation). Spelling: I use genre approach (imitation) then I move to the process approach (creation).	Vocabulary: vocabulary in context. Grammar: deductive teaching of grammar (grammar through texts) Spelling: dictation	Vocabulary, Grammar: there are a lot actually but what I opt for (for both grammar and vocabulary) is teaching them in context to be effectively used by students later Spelling: Much more practice and repetition.

Intensive practice using authentic and academic material	I recommend devoting sessions to language proficiency development through workshops and tutorials. Besides, I recommend integrating more home assignments, class assignments and writing projects with a specific emphasis on explicit instruction of lexico-grammar competencies.	More practice for students/ less number in classes/ the content has to match the students' needs and level/ the right way of evaluation which take into consideration all the students' mistakes/errors and to be done for each student individually or for all of them if having common mistakes.
The confusion of formal and informal variations, the impact of coded texting, are also prevalent and lead to many errors	Another main challenge face by students is related to coherence and cohesion (maintain a thread in writing).	As I suggested above and by the end, it is the teacher's responsibility to discover his/her students' challenges and deal with them in the appropriate way or in collaboration with other colleagues. If it's related to the curriculum, those issues should be also solved if possible.

ملخص الدراسة

تُعد الكتابة من المهارات الأساسية في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL)، إلا أن العديد من الطلبة يُظهرون ميولاً سلبياً نحوها، حيث يرونها صعبة وغير مجزية. هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء التحديات النسبية التي تطرحها مفردات اللغة، وقواعدها، والإملاء في كتابات طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية، من أجل تحديد الجانب الأكثر تحدياً من بينها. اعتمد البحث على تصميم دراسة حالة مدمجة ذات منهجية مختلطة، جمعت بين بيانات كمية مستمدة من ثلاثة اختبارات كفاءة في المفردات، والقواعد، والإملاء أُجريت على عينة من 30 طالباً جامعياً، وبيانات نوعية جُمعت من استبيان شبه موجه أُجيب عليه من قبل ستة أساتذة ذوي خبرة في تدريس وتصحيح الكتابة الطلابية. أظهرت النتائج أن الإملاء هو الجانب الأكثر صعوبة لدى الطلبة، كما انعكس في انخفاض درجاتهم بشكل ملحوظ في اختبار الإملاء مقارنةً بالقواعد والمفردات، إذ بلغ متوسط الدرجة $M = 7.9$ من 40. وعلى الرغم من ذلك، صرّح المعلمون بأنهم يعتبرون المفردات والقواعد والإملاء ذات أهمية متساوية في تدريس مهارة الكتابة. إلا أن إجاباتهم أوحى بشكل غير مباشر بأن الإملاء لا يحظى بالاهتمام الكافي في الممارسات التدريسية، وغالباً ما يولى أغلب الاهتمام للمفردات والقواعد. توصي الدراسة بضرورة دمج تعليم الإملاء بشكل أكثر فاعلية إلى جانب تعليم المفردات، نظراً لترابطهما الوثيق، مع تخصيص وقت أطول لتدريس مهارة الكتابة. كما سلط الضوء على بعض العوائق الصفية مثل كثرة عدد التلاميذ في القسم الواحد وصعوبة تقديم استجابة تقييمية فردية. هذا و قدمت النتائج توصيات عملية تتعلق بتخطيط المنهج، وأساليب التقييم، وتدريب المعلمين، إلى جانب اقتراح توجهات جديدة للبحوث المستقبلية تهدف إلى تطوير تعليم الكتابة في سياقات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.