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Investigating the Prevalence, Causes, and Impact of Writer's Block on English as a Foreign Language Learners when Developing their Research Proposals: The Case of Master Two Students of English at Biskra University

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a

Master Degree in Sciences of Language

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Declaration

I, Mohamed Abderrahmane **BEBROUZA**, solemnly affirm that this dissertation entitled **"Investigating the Prevalence, Causes, and Impact of Writer's Block on English as a Foreign Language Learners when Developing their Research Proposals: The Case of Master Two Students of English at Biskra University"** is my independent contribution to field of Applied Linguistics in order to get a Master's degree in Sciences of Language at the university of Mohamed Khider Biskra. This dissertation is build upon my own words unless those sections where proper citation has been mentioned. Equally important, this body of work has not been published in any other institution for the purpose of any other degree.

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Date: *June, 2025.*

Dedication

Keeping this short and sweet,

5 years have gone by like 5 days, and I'm not hyperbolizing.

Time is elusive when you are doing it with the right people

And for that I'm thankful

To every **professor, doctor, and teacher** who have instilled knowledge in

me throughout the past 5 years

To **classmates** who have shared the floor with me during nerve-racking

presentations

To **friends** who have let me in their bubble and became more than

family

I am forever grateful for your existence as I would not survive the

university experience without your continuous and unconditional love

and support

If I could do it all over again, I would still choose to do it with you.

Well,

Now I think you know what this is (Next chapter unlocked).

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Abstract

Writer's block is a prevailing impediment among writers in general and researchers, particularly during the development of their research proposals. This dissertation aims to investigate the prevalence, causes, and impact of this complex phenomenon on EFL Master Two students at Biskra University during the development of their research proposals. Following a Mixed-methods approach grounded in Pragmatism paradigm, this present study adopted an Embedded Mixed-methods Case Study research design. For the collection of the required data, the researcher opted for two data collection methods: a structured questionnaire, distributed online to 40 Master Two students of English at Biskra University, in order to collect quantitative data upon its prevalence, and semi-structured interviews, conducted with 5 participants drawn from the questionnaire's respondents who have indicated experiencing writer's block throughout the process of developing their research proposal. These interviews aimed to gather the students' insights about this block for the purpose of understanding its main causes and impact on the progress and quality of research proposals' development. The findings revealed that 75% of the 40 EFL Master Two students at Biskra University suffer from this problem due to multiple reasons, including perfectionism, overthinking, self-doubt, lack of research proposal writing experience, as well as emotional and psychological elements, such as anxiety, stress, and emotional exhaustion. All of which led to delays in their research proposal development and frequent dissatisfaction with the overall quality of the work concerning cohesion and clarity. Understanding these barriers is important for the development of effective strategies, which would help these EFL students in overcoming this obstacle and ultimately write sound research proposals. This study lays the background for further research on effective intervention strategies.

Keywords: academic writing, EFL, research proposal development, writer's block

List of Acronyms

APA: American Psychological Association

EAP: English for Academic Purposes

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

FKIP: Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan (Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Indonesia)

K-12: Kindergarten to 12th Grade

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

MLA: Modern Language Association

RAS: Reticular Activating System

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

WOOP: Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, Plan

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General Introduction

1. **Background of the Study**

Research proposal writing is a crucial component of a Master's degree, particularly for students pursuing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs. It represents a significant academic milestone, requiring a high level of language proficiency, academic rigor, and research skills. For many EFL Master's students, this process can be challenging, not only due to the demands of developing a coherent research plan but also because of language barriers and unfamiliarity with academic writing conventions in English. One of the most common psychological barriers faced by students during this process is writer's block, a phenomenon that has been shown to impede writing progress, reduce productivity, and contribute to increased stress and anxiety (Rose, 1984).

Writer's block is characterized by an inability to generate written content, often resulting from a combination of emotional, cognitive, and contextual factors (Zorba, 2023). While it is frequently discussed in the context of creative writing, its implications for academic writing, especially among EFL students, have received limited attention in the literature. For EFL students working on research proposals, writer's block can be particularly debilitating. This condition may stem from common causes, such as fear of failure or perfectionism (Rahmat, 2020b). Additionally, EFL students face unique linguistic and cultural challenges when writing in a foreign language (Singh, 2019). The pressure to produce high-quality academic proposals in a second language can exacerbate feelings of self-doubt and anxiety, further hindering the writing process (Wan Osman et al., 2024). These compounded challenges make it essential to understand and address writer's block in the context of EFL academic writing.

Despite the considerable impact that writer's block can have on the academic progress of EFL Master's students, there is limited research focused on understanding its prevalence, causes, and impact during the development of a research proposal. Most existing studies on this phenomenon have been conducted in environments where the first language is English, or the focus is on writers in creative fields rather than academic writing. Hence, this gap in the literature points to the need for further investigation into the specific challenges that EFL Master's students face during research proposal development, particularly the prevalence, causes, and impact of writer's block on its progress and quality.

2. Statement of the Problem

Academic writing is a type of writing that is used in academia, encompassing universities, schools, and research institutions for multiple purposes such as conducting a research, communicating knowledge, and archiving discoveries. The former is a systematic process that is documented via formal writing in the form of a dissertation. A dissertation is a prolonged piece of academic writing on a particular question, difficulty or gap in knowledge that aims to contribute new insights into a specific field of study. It is usually executed by a postgraduate student pursuing a Master's degree, who is expected to independently carry out research and subsequently expands their own and others' knowledge.

Writing a dissertation is a laborious task as it involves a series of systematic steps to be followed, starting with selecting a feasible research problem, conducting a comprehensive literature review, raising clear and concise research questions, formulating correspondent research hypotheses, choosing the appropriate methodology, collecting data, analyzing it, and eventually reporting those data.

For a research project to be successful, a layout should be first established in order to guide the researcher throughout their research timeline that is a research proposal. According to Boden et al. (2005), a research proposal is a concise document that outlines a research plan. It aims to convince the academic committee that the researcher has a significant research project as well as the ability to complete it. The proposal lays out the research objectives, questions, hypotheses, methodology, significance, delimitations, structure, and timeline, ensuring that the researcher has a crystal clear plan to move forward accordingly. This helps to maintain focus, manage time effectively, and address any potential challenges that may arise during the research process. Additionally, a sound research proposal ensures not only strong content, but also a clear, logical, and cohesive writing that strengthens its quality (Boden et al., 2005)

However, a noticeable number of EFL Master Two learners at Biskra University face difficulties when developing their research proposals due to writer's block. Ahmed (2019) defined it as "…the inability for a writer to produce new material" (p.2). This problem has been experienced firsthand by the researcher, and it has also been observed in EFL settings through the experiences of their classmates when they started developing their research proposals, highlighting its importance since the research proposal stands as the foundation for the research project. Procrastination, perfectionism, self-doubt, and anxiety are all common symptoms of writer's block which can be due to fear of failure, lack of inspiration, burnout, lack of support, and feedback.

Therefore, these EFL Master Two students struggle to write and complete their research proposals as, on top of the complexity of the task at hand, they face another predicament that handcuffs and affects them at an early and equally crucial stage of their academic journey in multiple ways, including missing deadlines, diminishing motivation and enthusiasm, heightening

anxiety and stress levels, lowering self-esteem, and potentially abandoning the whole research. All of which can lead to a significant setback for the researcher's academic career.

In this regard, this current study aims to investigate how prevalent is writer's block among EFL Master Two students at Biskra University, to identify its common causes, and to explore the impact it has on their research proposals. Thus, by shedding light on these aspects, the researchers tend to provide data on how widespread writer's block is within this population, to identify key contributing factors to it and to highlight the impact of writer's block on the development of the research proposal.

3. Main Research Aim and Specific Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to investigate the prevalence, causes, and impact of writer's block among EFL Master Two students when developing their research proposals at Biskra University. More specifically, this research work aims to:

- determine the prevalence of writer's block among EFL Master Two students at Biskra University during research proposal development.

- identify the primary causes contributing to writer's block among EFL Master Two students during the development of their research proposals at Biskra University.

- identify the impact of writer's block on the progress and quality of EFL Master Two students' research proposals at Biskra University.

4. Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent is writer's block prevalent among EFL Master Two students at Biskra University during the development of their research proposals?

RQ2: What are the primary causes behind writer's block for EFL Master Two students at Biskra University when developing their research proposals?

RQ3: What is the impact of writer's block on the progress and quality of EFL Master Two students' research proposals at Biskra University?

5. Research Hypotheses

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

RH1: We hypothesize that a significant number of EFL Master Two students at Biskra University suffer from writer's block when developing their research proposals.

RH2: We hypothesize that specific factors, such as lack of writing, language proficiency, perfectionism, and procrastination contribute to writer's block among EFL Master Two students at Biskra University when developing their research proposals.

RH3: We hypothesize that writer's block negatively impacts the progress and quality of EFL Master Two students' research proposals at Biskra University by causing delays and reducing their quality.

6. The Research Methodology for this Study

The research problem under investigation for this study focuses on understanding the phenomenon of writer's block by determining its prevalence, identifying its causes, and highlighting its impact among EFL Master Two students at Biskra University during the development of their research proposals. All of which indicates the twofold nature of the study, that is to measure the prevalence of writer's block without hypothesis testing or implicated intervention (non-experimental quantification) and to identify its underlying causes and impact on research proposal development within the chosen small case study (descriptive qualitative).

The study is guided by the pragmatism paradigm, which supports practicality and the integration of both quantitative and qualitative research methods (Ivankova, 2015). This shows how this pragmatism paradigm aligns with the present mixed-methods study, which integrates both quantitative and qualitative data, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the real-world phenomenon "writer's block".

The research methodology for this study is approached from a holistic perspective taking into consideration not only the nature of the study, but also the raised research questions, the aligned aims, and the researcher's orientation, which values a comprehensive perspective that integrates both numbers and words. Accordingly, this present study adopts a Mixed-methods approach due to the fact that it involves both quantitative and qualitative data. The researcher aims to measure the prevalence of writer's block as well as its frequency and duration among Master Two students of English at Biskra University. Moreover, the researcher focuses on identifying the main causes and impact of writer's block on the progress and quality of their research proposals. Following this research approach, we opt for an Embedded Mixed-methods Case Study research design as the findings of the data collected will not be generalized to the entire population but rather focused around the chosen sample in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. Moreover, the participants chosen for the interviews are deducted from the questionnaire's respondents; that is, the qualitative data are integrated within the study's research design enriching the quantitative side as well as adding more depth to it since it directly complements and depends on it.

In accordance with the chosen research design, a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews are the data collection methods used in this study. First, the structured questionnaire is distributed online in order to collect quantitative data on the prevalence of

writer's block by not only addressing how common writer's block is but also its frequency and duration in order to draw a complete picture about the intensity and persistence of writer's block, which adds more depth to the prevalence data. After the completion of this stage, semi-structured interviews are conducted with a subset of five participants selected from the questionnaire respondents who have reported experiencing writer's block during the development of their research proposals. These interviews provide in-depth insights into the experience of writer's block with a focus on identifying its main causes and its impact on the progress and quality of research proposal.

Correspondingly, the analysis is conducted in two stages. Quantitative results from the questionnaire are analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions and percentages to determine the prevalence, frequency and duration of writer's block among the participants who have completed the questionnaire. This analysis is conducted using Excel ensuring accurate computation and visualization of results. The followed stage is the analysis of the qualitative data collected from the interviews. These data are analyzed using thematic analysis with the guidance of MAXDQA software. The process includes transcribing the audio recordings, coding the data to identify recurring patterns, and grouping these codes into broader themes. This approach helps in identifying the main causes and impact of writer's block as experienced by the participants. Therefore, the two datasets are integrated to offer a richer and more holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Quantitative results, including the prevalence, frequency, and duration of writer's block are compared and aligned with the qualitative findings, which identify the main causes and impact as experienced by the participants. This synthesis of results ensures that measurable trends are complemented and enriched by personal narratives, resulting in a comprehensive and multidimensional analysis.

6.1 Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique

The target population for this research study consists of EFL students at Biskra University. A case study of 40 Master Two students of English constitute the sample size, and a non-probability sampling technique is employed as the participants chosen for this study are based on the inclusion criterion of developing a research proposal. This purposive sampling ensures that the sample is both relevant to the study's objective and manageable for the data collection and analysis.

7. Significance of the Study

This study serves to fill in a gap in the literature by examining the prevalence, causes, and impact of writer's block among EFL Master Two students during the development of their research proposals. By providing insights into the prevalence, causes, and impact of writer's block on the progress and quality of the research proposal, this research can inform more effective pedagogical strategies and support mechanisms, ultimately enhancing student outcomes and well-being. The findings can guide the development of targeted interventions to support EFL students, improving the completion rates of sound research proposals and overall academic performance. Additionally, this study's outcomes can influence educational policies by advocating for comprehensive support systems and resources, promoting a more inclusive and equitable academic environment.

8. Delimitations of the Study

The study is defined by specific delimitations that set its scope and boundaries. Therefore:

- It focuses on Master Two students of English at Biskra University, excluding students from other universities or programs. This specific focus is due to the allocated time for the completion of the current work, as a larger sample may be unmanageable. Moreover,

these students are chosen due to their unique challenges and relevance to the research objectives.

- Additionally, it addresses the prevalence, causes, and impacts of writer's block during the development of research proposal, i.e., it does not extend to other academic writing tasks or disciplines in order to maintain a focused and manageable study scope.

- Furthermore, data collection is confined to structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, excluding other qualitative or quantitative methods. These methods are chosen to ensure the accessibility and relevance of participants.

- Equally important, the study is conducted within a specified period during the academic year, which might not capture seasonal variations in students' experiences of writer's block.

These choices ensure a focused approach, which helps to narrow the study's scope, making it more manageable.

9. The Referencing Style for this Dissertation

Given the fact that this research study falls under the field of social sciences, the latest version of the American Psychological Association (APA, seventh edition) is the referencing style chosen to be applied throughout the text. Nonetheless, some minor adjustments, concerning the "Justify" function, have been taken into consideration after thorough discussion and agreement with the supervisor as it is believed to enhance readability by creating a clean and professional look, and to contribute to the aesthetic of the text by evenly aligning it along both the left and right margins.

10. Structure of the Dissertation

This present dissertation follows the underpinning structure:

Chapter One delves into the phenomenon of writer's block by comprehensively exploring its definition and conceptual framework. It then examines its historical background, including its etymology and the evolution of research conducted upon it. The chapter further cites the various causes of writer's block as well as its impact on learners' academic performance, psychological wellbeing, and creativity. Furthermore, it reviews and synthesizes strategies for overcoming this phenomenon from different insights in the literature. Eventually, the chapter highlights the gap in literature, which this research aims to fill.

Chapter Two provides a well-rounded overview of a research proposal, starting with its definition and perspectives taken from distinct existing literature. Moreover, it explores some dimensions behind the development of a research proposal, including its main purpose, its different types, and its essential components. The chapter proceeds to document the common challenges faced by learners when developing research proposals. Notably, it concludes with some writing tips for effective research proposal development, which are based from previous studies.

Chapter Three presents a detailed account of the methodology employed in this study. It begins by providing a brief theoretical background about the chosen research paradigm(s), approach(es), and design(s), followed by the rationale, which justifies these choices. Additionally, it elaborates on the data collection methods used for this study, including the structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews by discussing their structure, aim, validation, and piloting process. Equally, it outlines the data collection procedures, data analysis techniques; namely, descriptive statistics for the quantitative data and thematic analysis for the

qualitative insights, as well as the population, sample, and sampling techniques utilized in this investigation. The chapter concludes with a comprehensive description of the study and its rationale, which ensures a clear justification of these methodological choices.

Chapter Four reports the data collected from both data collection methods, providing a comprehensive analysis of these findings. It starts by summarizing and describing the results obtained from the structured questionnaire, using descriptive statistics; for instances, percentages and frequencies visualized via pie charts, bar graphs, and frequency distribution tables, as well as the insights gathered using the semi-structured interviews. The chapter therefore transitions to the analysis and interpretation of each data set in order to draw conclusions, which answer the earlier raised research questions of this study. Subsequently, it synthesizes these findings by indentifying key patterns and relationships between the quantitative side and qualitative one.

11. Operational Definitions

A number of terms require some elucidation to determine how and in which sense the researcher uses them.

Academic Writing: A structured form of writing used by researchers and educators, which includes examining concepts, evaluating information, and arranging data in a clear and structured format (Dhobi, 2024). It focuses on clear reasoning and evidence-backed arguments in order to help readers to comprehend the topic being discussed (Dhobi, 2024).

EFL (English as a Foreign Language): A field of study focused on teaching English to non-native speakers. EFL students often face challenges in writing academic texts in English, as they must navigate both linguistic and cultural barriers to effectively express their ideas (Hyland & Tse, 2004).

Master Two: It refers to students enrolled in their second year of a Master's degree program at university.

Research Proposal: It is a detailed plan of a proposed research project, outlining the research questions, methodology, literature review, and expected outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Writer's Block: It is a psychological condition where an individual experiences difficulty or inability to produce written content (Rose, 1984). "Although writer's block can have many manifestations and many causes, all blocked writers share two traits: they do not write despite being intellectually capable of doing so, and they suffer because they are not writing" (Flaherty, 2004, p.80).

Chapter One

Chapter One: Writer's Block: Understanding the Phenomenon

Introduction

The present chapter is set off to present a holistic viewpoint of the phenomenon, known as writer's block, starting with its historical background, etymology, and distinct definitions and perspectives from psychology, linguistics, and education in order to draw a well-rounded picture upon this issue. Sequentially, it presents a solid backdrop about what existing studies have documented concerning its main causes and impact on learners' academic performance, psychological well-being, and creativity. Eventually, it concludes by highlighting researchers' proposed strategies and recommendations in overcoming this block.

1.1 The Concept of Writer's Block

The following subtitles explore the various aspects of writer's block, including its historical background, etymology, definitions and perspectives, as well as the history of research conducted on this phenomenon in order to better understand the concept of writer's block.

1.1.1 Historical Background

For centuries, writer's block has been an acknowledged phenomenon affecting not only present-day writers but also those from previous eras across different genres. According to Castillo (2014), the term writer's block was first coined by the Austrian psychiatrist Edmund Bergler in 1947. In their book, *The Writer and Psychoanalysis*, Bergler (1950) described it as a neurotic inhibition of productivity in writers. Their contributions provided a foundational understanding of writer's block by shedding light on the clinical perspective of this issue, stating that writer's block stems from psychological factors that inhibit a writer's ability to produce new work. Additionally, Bergler's work paved the way for future psychological research on writer's block's causes and effects (Bergler, 1950).

By the mid-20th century, the term writer's block gained widespread recognition, particularly within the self-help movement and therapy-oriented culture. Writers, namely, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Joseph Mitchell faced significant creative challenges, bringing further attention to the psychological aspects of the condition. Their experiences contributed to the growing understanding of writer's block as a multifaceted issue influenced by various psychological and environmental factors (Kellogg, 1994; Rose, 1984).

1.1.2 Etymology of Writer's Block

The term writer was referred to as writere in old English, which denotes for someone who can write like a clerk, scribe, or copyist. Their job was to manually write documents or copy texts. Moreover, it was used to refer to authors, who produce literary compositions, or philosophers, who write philosophical books. The term writere is derived from the verb writan in old English, which describes the action of that verb; that is, to write. This verb could be traced back to Proto-Germanic writan, which means to tear or to scratch as writing was originally done by carving or scratching (Harper, n.d.).

As for the term block, it dates back to the early 14th century, where it originally meant a solid piece of wood. It was spelled as blok or blokke. However, it goes way back to Old French bloc in the 13th century, which meant log or block of wood. Bloc was borrowed from Germanic sources like Middle Dutch block, referring to a trunk of a tree and Old High German bloh. By the 15th century, its meaning has been generalized to any solid piece; for instance, executioner's block, mold or shape, sarcastically head, city block, and auction block. Over time, the term block has evolved to denote a hindrance or an obstacle (Harper, n.d.).

In the grammar field, a noun phrase is a phrase that consists of a noun as its head and modifier(s) which describes the head (Greenbaum, 1996). Following this grammar rule, writer's

block could be considered a noun phrase, which consist of two nouns, block as its main head and writer's as its modifier, which gives additional information about who is experiencing this block.

1.1.3 Definitions and Perspectives

The complex phenomenon, known as writer's block, has been defined differently across various fields, such as psychology, linguistics, and education, each providing a distinct viewpoint on its nature.

In the field of psychology, writer's block is often linked to cognitive and emotional impediments. Rose (1984) defined it as "the inability to begin or continue writing for reasons other than a lack of skill or commitment" (p.3). It was further elaborated by Boice (1990) that writer's block can be caused by internal struggles, which writers might experience, including procrastination and fear of failure. Furthermore, Bergler (1950), who first coined the term, described it as a neurotic inhibition of productivity caused by unconscious psychological conflicts. All in all, these perspectives shed light on how emotional and cognitive factors interplay to create a state of creative paralysis.

From a linguistic perspective, writer's block can be seen as a disruption in language production processes, which makes effective writing a challenge. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) argued that writer's block can stem from difficulties in cognitive processes essential for writing. Selecting appropriate words, forming grammatically correct sentences, and ensuring coherence throughout the piece, are such cases. Similarly, Flower and Hayes (1980) pointed that writing includes tackling complex linguistic problems, emphasizing that writer's block tends to emerge when individuals struggle with cognitive and linguistic overload. Rahmat (2020a) further emphasized that in academic contexts, writer's block can be exacerbated by a lack of rhetoric knowledge or difficulties in structuring arguments. All of which indicates that linguistic

constraints whether at the level of words, sentences, or discourse can contribute to the phenomenon of writer block.

Within Education, writer's block can emerge from challenges linked to educational environments, such as writing anxiety, pressure to meet deadlines, and lack of guidance in developing effective writing strategies (Rahmat, 2020a). Additionally, Nurkamto et al. (2024) expanded on this by examining how academic stress and self-perceived deficiency in writing impact learners' ability to write effectively. They argued that learners who perceive themselves as inadequate writers are more likely to experience hesitation and negative self-talk, which impedes their progress in writing. Moreover, Rahmat (2020a) added that educational factors, such as rigid assessment criteria, limited opportunities for peer feedback, and lack of scaffolding in writing instruction can intensify the manifestation of writer's block. In short, these perspectives focus on how educational factors could impact learners' writing activity leading to writer's block.

1.1.4 History of Research on Writer's Block

According to Bergler (1955) and Leader (1991), psychoanalysts conducted the earliest research on writer's block in the early 20th century (as cited in Ahmed, 2019). Most of these psychoanalysts were learners of Sigmund Freud, who has conducted one of the earliest case studies on writer's block, in which his learners expanded on it later on (Castillo, 2014; Leader, 1991, as cited in Ahmed, 2019).

At first, writer's block has been seen as a psychological phenomenon which surpasses conscious control (Bergler, 1950, 1955; Boice, 1995; Flaherty, 2015; Leader, 1991; Rose, 1984, as cited in Ahmed, 2019). According to Bergler (1950), Boice (1995), Castillo (2014), and Rose (1984), excessive control over the writing process could lead to procrastination and inconsistent thinking, which contribute to writer's block (as cited in Ahmed, 2019). Additionally, motivation

and emotion have been identified as significant blocking factors by both psychoanalysts and modern psychologists (Bergler, 1950; Boice, 1995; Flaherty, 2015, as cited in Ahmed, 2019).

During the 1970s, psychologists touched on another aspect of writer's block, in which they have identified behavioral factors contributing to it, including procrastination, irregular writing habits, and poor self-control (Goldiamond, 1977; Harris, 1974; Passman, 1976; Upper, 1974, as cited in Ahmed, 2019). By the 1980s, interventions that could help overcome writer's block have been tested by Rosenberg and Lah (1982) through the use of a schedule and reinforces (as cited in Ahmed, 2019).

Rose (1983) and Boice (1985) explored cognitive dimensions of writer's block (as cited in Ahmed, 2019). In order to identify these cognitive dimensions that contribute to it, Rose (1981) developed a Questionnaire for Identifying Writer's Block (QIWB) (as cited in Ahmed, 2019). Respondents' attitudes towards writing and their tendency to become blocked have been measured using it. Results indicated that perfectionistic attitudes and behaviors were more prevalent in high blockers than low ones (Rose, 1983, as cited in Ahmed, 2019). Boice (1985) sought to identify what are the others cognitive factors behind this block (as cited in Ahmed, 2019). Therefore, they have developed a think-aloud protocol in order to do so. Work apprehension, procrastination, dysphoria, impatience, perfectionism, evaluation anxiety, and rules were the main themes highlighted (Boice, 1985, as cited in Ahmed, 2019).

Fewer studies on writer's block have been conducted after Boice's protocol (Ahmed, 2019). Nonetheless, numerous books and review articles were published in the 1990s and 2000s, which summarized past findings and expanded existing theories by incorporating evidence from psychology, including stress responses, neuroimaging, and brain injuries (Castillo, 2014;

Flaherty, 2015; Kaufman & Kaufman, 2009; Leader, 1991; Nelson, 1993, as cited in Ahmed, 2019).

Fear of evaluation, writing apprehensions, life stress, and mood fluctuations were the factors identified by Kaufman and Kaufman's research (2009), which heavily relied on interviews and case studies with writers (as cited in Ahmed, 2019). Flaherty (2015) has also discussed writer's block from a neurological perspective, in which they have focused on how effective and motivational factors can lead to writer's block (as cited in Ahmed, 2019).

1.2 Causes of Writer's Block

Writer's block is a double-faced phenomenon that can be influenced by different combinations of external and internal factors (Zorba, 2023). In their study investigating undergraduate learners' writing block in the context of English as an academic language, employing a mixed-methods survey design, Zorba (2023) reported that internal causes, namely stress, procrastination, and fear of failure as well as external factors, such as the lack of clear instructions for assignments and experience in writing, contribute to learners' writing block when producing argumentative-critical and expository texts as they suffer mainly in the drafting stage of it.

According to Baştuğ et al. (2017) phenomenological study, learners who suffer from anxiety when it comes to performing written tasks, as well as those who have prejudice and fear negative evaluation from their peers or instructors, do face difficulties when writing which contribute to their writing block. Additionally, the study's results indicated that academic pressure, including high expectations and grading system can heighten learners' stress leading to the inability to start writing. Environmental distractions such as negative classroom settings can

also hinder their ability to focus; therefore, to create effective pieces of writing (Baştuğ et al., 2017).

Moreover, learners' perception about their writing abilities and academic competence can hold a significant pin towards their progress in writing as low self-esteem and self-doubt could diminish their motivation leading to block when they start writing (Nurkamto et al., 2024). Boice (1985) added that perfectionism is a trait that can lead to writer's block, especially for those writers who have high expectations of themselves. They seek to produce flawless work, paying extensive attention to details. All of which could lead to procrastination, which would increase pressure and ultimately block the writing process contributing to the inability to make progress, and incomplete writing (Boice, 1985).

On another note, Ahmed and Güss (2022) stated that physical fatigue and health issues may affect cognitive functions making it hard for writers to concentrate in written tasks which lead to writer's block. Gorospe and Rayton (2022) posit that deficiencies in reading, writing, ideation, and self-confidence affects learners' writing, making writer's block manifested.

Conversely, writer's block causes could be categorized within four categories: physiological or affective, motivational, cognitive, and behavioral (Amabile, 1985; Boice, 1985; Dearing, 2007; Flaherty, 2015; Kaufman & Kaufman, 2009; Rosenberg & Lah, 1983, as cited in Ahmed, 2019).

According to Flaherty (2015), Kaufman and Kaufman (2009), and Nelson (1993), abnormal levels of arousal, whether it being high or low, due to stress and emotional intensity such as anxiety, depression, grief, and burnout could disrupt writer's memory, decision making, and creativity, which are required for effective writing (as cited in Ahmed, 2019). Arnstein (2009) and Nazarian et al. (2010) supported the same idea stating that stress help release cortisol

and adrenaline hormones, which enhance alertness with optimal threshold; however, at high levels, they impair prefrontal cortex and hippocampus functions (as cited in Ahmed, 2019). According to them, this disruption could negatively influence the decision making of structuring ideas and creativity in generating new ones.

Moreover, Davis (2009) and Flaherty (2015) added that intense depression or mania can block creativity by either reducing drive or causing scattered thinking (as cited in Ahmed, 2019). On the other hand, other studies showed that mood disorders; for instance, bipolar disorder can sometimes enhance writers' productivity as they might block it especially during intense emotional states (Andreasen, 1997; Kaufman & Kaufman, 2009, as cited in Ahmed, 2019).

Many researchers, including Boice (1985), Kaufman and Kaufman (2009), Flaherty (2015), Michael (2016), and Smeets (2008) discussed that evaluation anxiety, which is the fear of others' criticism or rejection, and loss of enjoyment are the motivational factors contributing to writer's block (as cited in Ahmed, 2019). These factors may lead writers to experience a freezing state where they face a lack of ideas, which could lead to a block in expressing them fluently.

Cognitive factors, including perfectionism, fixed perspective, and inefficient time and effort's usage contribute to writer's block (Boice, 1985; Rose, 1980, 1985; Rose, 1984; Smeets, 2008, as cited in Ahmed, 2019). Procrastination, changing routine, and following unstructured writing schedule are the behavioral factors broadly acknowledged by Boice (1985), Dearing (2007), Goldiamond (1977), Harris (1974), Passman (1976), Nelson (1993), Rosenberg and Lah (1982), and Upper (1974) (as cited in Ahmed, 2019).

1.3 Impact of Writer's Block

Writer's block can affect writers in general and learners specifically from different aspects, including academic performance, psychological well-being and creativity.

1.3.1 Academic Performance

Research highlighted that writer's block impact learners' academic performance negatively. Bane (2010) highlighted that it can impact their ability to engage in nuanced thought, self-reflection, and creative expression as stress may temporarily shut down the cerebral cortex, making learners paralyzed, anxious, and frustrated leading to emotional numbness. All of which could affect their grades as well as their learning experience by producing non quality work.

Additionally, Evans (2013) reported that writer's block can hinder their academic performance by impeding their ability to complete written tasks, such as essays, projects, reports, or theses due to emotional and psychological challenges which decreases the learner's motivation. Similarly, Horwitz et al. (2018) stated that this challenge can lead to procrastination, which would contribute to learners facing some hardships in completing assignments and expressing their ideas effectively, ultimately impacting their grades and academic success.

Furthermore, Rose (2009) mentioned that missing deadlines and reducing learners' productivity are one of the impacts caused by writer's block on their academic success. Baştuğ et al. (2017) emphasized on the negative impact of writer's block by stating that it makes learners avoid writing. Thus, they produce incomplete assignments which would contribute to their lack of engagement in the writing process. From another perspective, Zorba (2023) discussed that writer's block impacts learners' academic success by impeding their ability to effectively develop argumentative-critical and expository essays, mainly when they struggle with the drafting and planning process, which would lead to poor quality works.

1.3.2 Psychological Well-being

According to different research studies, learners' psychological wellbeing can be influenced by writer's block in a negative way. In a qualitative study conducted by Birk (2013) at

Boston University, they have in-depth interviewed 44 undergraduate learners, who reported experiencing significant difficulties with academic writing. They synthesized that writer's block fosters anxiety and stress levels among those learners as they often perceive academic writing as a high-stakes task. Therefore, their academic experience might be disturbed by feelings of inadequacy and instability. In a similar vein, Baştuğ et al. (2017) study which employs a phenomenological research design in order to explore classroom teacher candidates' lived experiences with writer's block. Results showed that this phenomenon affects learners' psychological well-being by causing anxiety, fear of criticism, and feelings of inadequacy. All of these factors would diminish their motivation and decrease their confidence.

Moreover, Evans's (2013) work on *Pathways Through Writing Blocks in the Academic Environment*, in which they leverage their experience as a writer, psychotherapeutic counselor, and university tutor. They aspired to gain a comprehensive view about the phenomenon of writer's block in order to help academic writers overcome this challenge by combining theoretical discussions, practical exercises, and case studies. Their work highlighted that the academic pressure, which learners face, heightens their stress and anxiety levels, eventually creating a cycle of frustration and avoidance which would reduce their productivity.

1.3.3 Creativity

Existing studies discussed the negative impact writer's block has on learners' creativity. Enriquez and Vaughan (2024) argued that writer's block is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, which expands from a mere cognitive challenge to include social, cultural, emotional, and embodied experience. In their study entitled "Exploring Writer's Block as Embodied Experience Across Grades," they employed different research designs according to each educational level they have studied as their research included participants from elementary, middle school, high

school, and adult writers. Correspondingly, they adapted "thinking with theory" approach (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, as cited in Enriquez & Vaughan, 2024), which allowed them to uncover connections between their findings and theoretical frameworks. Eventually, they concluded that writer's block can restrict learners' creativity as it affects not only their emotional side by causing frustration but also their physical one, leading to a sense of paralysis which impedes their creativity.

Contrastingly, Bane (2010) approached the issue from a cognitive perspective exploring how neurological processes, particularly the brain's Reticular Activating System, impacts students ability to engage in creative writing. Through this work, Bane (2010) explained that when an individual is stressed, the RAS shifts control from cerebral cortex, which is responsible for nuanced analysis and creativity, to the limbic system, which regulates instinctual responses; for instance, fight, flight, or freeze. This shift would lead to temporary creativity inhibition. In Moore's (2018) work, they examined the challenges that academics, who are also creative practitioners, experience. Additionally, they discussed how tension between teaching and producing satisfactory work as academic responsibilities, as well as innate creativity pursuits, could create an impediment leading to what is known as creativity depletion.

1.4 Strategies to Overcome Writer's Block

Different strategies to overcome writer's block have been developed since the 1950s (Dearing, 2007; Goldiamond, 1977; Harris, 1974; Nelson, 1991; Passman, 1976; Rosenberg & Lah, 1982; Smeets, 2008; Upper, 1974, as cited in Ahmed, 2019). Smeets (2008) emphasized that in order to address writer's block effectively, the tailored strategies should be determined by the blocking's root cause. This approach is reflected in his seven-step coaching program, which focuses on individualized solution based on each individual's experience with writer's block. It

involves acknowledging the block and the fact that it is not a permanent issue, identifying its underlying cause, breaking free from self-doubt and negative thought, setting realistic goals, building new writing habits, using visualization techniques, and taking consistent actions, which ensures tackling both the psychological and the practical aspects of writer's block. Conversely, Ahmed's (2019) thesis, An Analysis of Writer's Block: Causes, Characteristics, and Solutions, presented rather simple and easy to implement solutions.

> The most common solutions writers used to try to get over blocks were taking breaks, forcing themselves to keep writing, and working on a different writing project. The solutions that were found to be the most effective overall were those that seemed to serve multiple functions. For example, talking about a writing project with others could both improve one's mood and expose a writer to new perspectives [they] may have never considered alone. Receiving encouragement from others could boost motivation and other people could hold a writer accountable for producing work in a timely fashion. The effects of discussing an idea with others could potentially solve any of the specific causes under study or any combination of those causes a writer might be dealing with. (Ahmed, 2019, p. 51)

This highlights how collaborative as well as external support, which addresses multiple challenges simultaneously, could help overcome writer's block effectively. "For instance, calling a friend to discuss a writing project is easier and more convenient than going to a group brainstorming session or receiving training to change one's perspective about writing from a professional" (Smeets, 2008, as cited in Ahmed, 2019, p.53). This example emphasizes the ease and convenience of these solutions compared to the previous suggested ones. However, these kind of solutions, regardless of their efficiency, they might have some limitations as they would

not work with all writers, especially introverted ones or the ones working on a very personal projects that they might prefer disclosing it to themselves.

Comparably, Zorba (2023) reported that "continue-to-write and avoid-writing strategies in different combinations" (p.1037) were the strategies used by learners in order to cope with writer's block. This idea implements that students either persist writing, regardless of their writing block, or stop writing altogether. Moreover, their study's results indicated that clear instructions, studying sample texts, and feedback from teachers are needed in order to overcome this block (Zorba, 2023).

Evdash and Zhuravleva (2020) study suggested two strategies in order to overcome second language writers' writing block: classroom intervention and individualized intervention.

Classroom intervention is an approach by Evdash and Zhuravleva (2020) which focuses on some suggested activities for the pre-writing stage. These activities are designed to reduce writers' fear of an empty page and to improve their writing fluency. Free writing is one of these suggested activities, which emphasizes that participant uninterruptedly writes for five to ten minutes freely without paying attention to grammar rule and punctuation as the main goal is to generate as many ideas as possible without worrying about linguistic accuracy (Evdash & Zhuravleva, 2020). Looping is another proposed practice by them, which focuses on connecting participants personally with their topic in order to develop their thoughts systematically via taking notes rapidly for about five minutes, then highlighting the most important ideas together, and eventually building on these ideas with subsequent loops.

 A further recommended strategy by Evdash and Zhuravleva (2020) is word association. This task focuses on the idea that participants write words or phrases related to a specific word for about five to ten minutes so as to generate new ideas and activate their creativity. Moreover,

WOOP is another noteworthy approach, which encapsulates the principles of wish, outcome, obstacle, and plan (Evdash & Zhuravleva, 2020). This activity fosters setting goals, which participants wish to achieve, identifying challenging thoughts which may prevent them from achieving the set goals, and developing solutions collaboratively. All of which helps approach the barrier from different perspectives and insights. By doing so, participants can build a supportive environment where they feel seen and understood that their obstacles are shared and experienced by others. Thus, this teamwork approach would help in addressing the challenge of writer's block effectively (Evdash & Zhuravleva, 2020).

Individualized intervention is an approach which falls under "Drop in and Reboot your Writing" project suggested in the study of Evdash and Zhuravleva (2020). It includes one-on-one weekly meetings lasting about 30 minutes, over a period of 10 to 20 weeks. The aim of these meetings is to identify writer's specific challenges and the underlying causes behind it in order to develop specific individualized solutions, raise writer's awareness about their challenges and their root cause, and build their confidence as L2 writers (Evdash & Zhuravleva, 2020).

1.5 Research Gap in the Selected Review of Literature

These existing studies upon writer's block showed how multidimensional this phenomenon is by highlighting its distinct underlying causes and impact on learners' academic performance, mental well-being, and creativity as well as some coping strategies to it. However, they have been conducted with undergraduate learners, classroom teacher candidates, professional and semi professional writers, or across grades K-12 within English as a second language or first language communities, leaving a notable gap into the understanding of this block among EFL postgraduates, also known as, Master level learners. Additionally, most of these studies took place in Western contexts, particularly in the United States and Netherlands

while others emerged from Eastern regions, namely Turkey, Malaysia, Russia, and the Philippines. This focus pinpoints the lack of research conducted in North African countries, particularly in Algeria. Therefore, addressing this gap in research could help provide a more comprehensive understanding to this multifaceted phenomenon within this neglected context, which would help in tailoring effective coping strategies in order to help EFL Master's students in Algeria cope with this challenge.

Conclusion

The present chapter presented different aspects of the multi-dimensional phenomenon of writer's block by discussing its evolution throughout history since ancient times until today's day and age. It then dived into its linguistic origin, adding a layer to its denotation. Moreover, it highlighted various definitions and perspectives of writer's block, specifically in psychology, linguistic, and education. Profoundly, it reviewed, restated, and summarized existing studies' distinct contributions concerning the causes, impact, and coping strategies of writer's block.

Following this the next chapter will deep dive into the theoretical background of the research proposal development in order to provide a well-rounded picture upon its process according to academic convention.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two: Research Proposal Development: Reviewing Fundamentals

Introduction

This chapter builds upon the theoretical background of research proposal through highlighting how it has been defined by different scholars, the purpose behind constructing it, and its distinct types. Movingly, it accentuates the key components which form a sound research proposal, shares some tips for constructing it, and discusses common challenges faced by learners when developing their research proposal as documented in the literature.

2.1 Understanding a Research Proposal

In order to gain an understanding of a research proposal, the following subtitles explore its distinct definitions and perspectives, its purpose, and the different types that exist.

2.1.1 Definitions and Perspectives of a Research Proposal

Research proposal is a document that has been defined distinctly by numerous scholars. According to Polit and Hungler (1999), a research proposal is a pre-planned document entailing what the researcher aims to investigate or study. "[It serves] to communicate the research problem, its significance, and planned procedures for solving the problem to some interested party" (Polit & Hungler, 1999, p. 671). This definition emphasizes on some key aspects for a sound research proposal; for instance, outlining the research problem, identifying its significance, and enlisting the chosen procedures to be used in the study. All of which would help set the research on the right foot; nevertheless, it neglects an important facet; that is, ethical considerations which researchers should incorporate, especially in human sciences-like fields of study.

Conversely, Creswell and Creswell (2022) argued that a research proposal is a document that should highlight not only the key topics and methods which will be utilized in a study, but also the study's nature in advance in order to guide the planning of the research proposal

accordingly whether it being qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. This claim suggests that there are three distinct types of research proposals according to the nature of the study.

Moreover, Krathwohl and Smith (2005) and Matthews (2006) indicated that expressing the reasoning behind the study, as well as the process of conducting it, should be included for the written plan to be considered a research proposal (as cited in Heath and Tynan, 2010). This layer complements what has been said earlier by the aforementioned researchers.

Meanwhile, Mohd Sidik (2005) urged that all research proposals ought to include the objectives of the study, the rationale behind conducting it, and the process that the researcher will follow in order to achieve the aligned aims. This perspective could be regarded as oversimplified as it standardizes all research proposals into one template regardless of their different research areas. This approach may be ineffective since every research study can have unique requirements which may go beyond these key elements proposed by Mohd Sidik (2005). Additionally, they emphasized that a good preparation of the research proposal is required as securing funding is not an easy process, especially in a competitive environment (Mohd Sidik, 2005). Therefore, taking the time to well prepare the research proposal beforehand grants the researcher the opportunity to produce a quality work, which would be fairly evaluated as a poorly written one would not be considered fairly (Mohd Sidik, 2005).

Punch (2016) defined it as "...a document which is the product of a process of planning and designing" (p. 12). They suggested that it should encapsulate the problem under investigation, the aims behind the study, the process of conducting it, its contribution and significance. Additionally, they drew clear distinction between the research proposal and the research project as they argued that "a research proposal describes what will be done, and the research itself is carried out after the approval of the proposal" (p. 12). This statement indicates

that the research proposal, which is constructed first, determines the conduction of the study from its scrapping.

Based on the abovementioned definitions, it can be summarized that a research proposal is an academic document written in fulfillment of a research study by highlighting the study's aims, methodology, contribution, and significance.

2.1.2 Purpose of a Research Proposal

Developing a research proposal can be done for diverse reasons. Mohd Sidik (2005) posited that the purpose of a research proposal is encapsulated within two key objectives:

- To persuade the other party that the researcher has a valuable research topic.

- To assure them that they have both the capability and framework to achieve it.

Whereas, Polit and Hungler (1999) argued that a research proposal is a detailed description directed for professors and funding agencies in order to help them decide whether to invest in that research project or not. This point indicates that the research proposal could be regarded as a contract between the two parties which ensures that the research project is both valuable and fruitful.

These two claims indicate that the ultimate purpose behind a research proposal is to grant the approval and the funding source for the researcher to conduct their study as without it; the study will not see the light of day.

Krathwohl and Smith (2005) and Matthews (2006) stated that the purpose of a research proposal lies in the fact that it offers a justification answering the question of why is the study valuable to conduct (as cited in Heath and Tynan, 2010). On the other hand, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2003) discussed that structuring a research proposal is beneficial for organizing thoughts clearly, drawing connections between them, and effectively communicating the

researcher's vision (as cited in Heath and Tynan, 2010). A research proposal could serve also as a tool drawing clear lines between existing findings and future objectives (Riley, Wood, Clark, Wilkie & Szivas, 2000, as cited in Heath & Tynan, 2010).

According to Locke et al. (2011), communication, plan, and contract are the key elements that define the purpose behind the research proposal (as cited in Punch, 2016). The research proposal communicates the researcher's objectives and the research plan to the people in charge and funders who are responsible for approving or disapproving the research project (Locke et al., 2011, as cited in Punch, 2016). It also explains the plan, which the research study will follow in order to achieve the set out objectives (Locke et al., 2011, as cited in Punch, 2016). An approved research proposal is like a contract established between the researcher and the funding parties or the learner and their institutions for the study to be conducted meeting the academic standards (Locke et al., 2011, as cited in Punch, 2016). This account complements and highlights what has been said in the abovementioned studies about the numerous purposes of developing a research proposal.

2.1.3 Types of Research Proposals

According to Sundararajan (2021), there are seven different types of research proposals. Internal proposals are one of those types. They are documents written within an organization, which are addressed to people in charge in that same organization; for instance, a supervisor or a manager. They aim to benefit the organization through making change, improving system, or solving an issue. Internal proposals are subdivided into routine proposals and formal proposals. Another category of research proposals is referred to as external proposals. They are documents written by an independent individual or an organization and addressed to another entity in order to build a relationship through offering services that benefit both distinct parties. The third kind

of research proposals is known as solicited proposals. They are documents written in response for sponsor or funding agencies' requests call. These proposals have specific guidelines that are set by the sponsor or funding agency itself, which have identified a problem and are seeking a solution for it by external individual or organization (Sundararajan, 2021).

Conversely, unsolicited proposals are the ones submitted for sponsors who have not solicited an issue, but rather it is the researcher who identified an issue that they believe the funding agency would be interested in solving. Pre-proposals are another type of research proposals which are in the form of a brief abstract requested by the sponsor in order to review; therefore, in case of agreement, they would ask the researcher for a full written proposal. Continuation or non-competing proposals are the type of proposals which does not require competing for funding as they have already been reviewed, accepted, and given a partial funding by sponsors. The individual or organization continuously provide updated proposals in order to show their progress to the funding agency and request further funding for the following period. In contradiction, renewal or competing proposals are the documents addressed to ask for funding alongside new proposals as they are about to end (Sundararajan, 2021).

2.2 Components of a Research Proposal

A research proposal is a structured document which outlines the key elements of a research project. Its components may vary slightly depending on institutional or committee requirements (Heath & Tynan, 2010). However, research proposals commonly share the following sections:

2.2.1 Title and Outline

According to Mohd Sidik (2005), the title should be concise, informative, and engaging, highlighting the main focus and objectives behind the study. The title of a research proposal is the

initial indicator of its content; therefore, it should concisely and precisely summarize the research topic, reflecting the work's nature and scope (Baker & Foy, 2008, p. 47, as cited in Heath & Tynan, 2010). A helpful approach involves synthesizing the proposal's core into a single sentence, and then developing a title that can be refined as the research evolves (Saunders et al., 2003, as cited in Heath & Tynan, 2010). Moreover, an outline, which is often presented as a table of contents, provides an overview of the structure and organization of the research (Baker & Foy, 2008, as cited in Heath & Tynan, 2010).

2.2.2 Introduction

It is referred to as the background of the research study which sets the tone and provides context to the problem being investigated (Mohd Sidik, 2005). An effective introduction captures the reader's attention and generates interest in the study. In order to maintain focus and relevance, researchers should avoid including excessive information in the introduction as this section should set the stage for the rest of the proposal (Mauch & Park, 2003, as cited in Heath & Tynan, 2010).

2.2.3 Statement of the Problem

Polit and Hungler (1999) argued that the outset of the proposal should identify the problem that the research study is about to investigate. In this section, the problem statement should clearly conveys its significance to the reviewer, while also ensuring that the researchers do not over commit beyond what can be realistically achieved as a problem, that is overly broad or complex, as it would be unlikely to be solvable or manageable within the scope of the project (Polit & Hungler, 1999).

2.2.4 Literature Review

A literature review is defined as the selection and evaluation of available documents, both published and unpublished, on a specific topic, written from a particular standpoint in order to fulfill certain aims or express particular views on the nature of the topic and its investigation (Hart, 1998, p. 13, as cited in Heath & Tynan, 2010). This process involves critically assessing credible sources such as edited books, journal articles, monographs, databases, conference proceedings, dissertations, newspapers, empirical studies, government reports, historical records, statistical handbooks, and policy guides (Gabbott, 2004, p. 412, as cited in Heath & Tynan, 2010).

2.2.5 Research Problem or Questions and Aims of the Study

Based on the insights gained from the selected review of literature, researchers should develop a clearly articulated research problem or questions (Baker, 2000b; Hart, 1998, as cited in Heath & Tynan, 2010). This research problem should transition seamlessly from the preceding section and be restated with greater precision and detail, reflecting the deeper understanding acquired through the review (Krathwohl & Smith, 2005, as cited in Heath & Tynan, 2010). Additionally, researchers can define the objectives or aims of the study. These objectives should be written clearly and concisely to specify what the research intends to achieve (Saunders et al., 2003; Baker & Foy, 2008; Hart, 1998, as cited in Heath & Tynan, 2010).

It is essential to ensure that these objectives are realistic and feasible within the constraints of time and resources. Overambitious goals may indicate a lack of understanding of the research process and diminish credibility rather than impress evaluators (Heath & Tynan, 2010).

2.2.6 Research Hypotheses

Memon (2019) stated, "A research hypothesis is a statement of anticipation or forecast that will be tested by research" (p. 52). In other words, it refers to a predictable claim which can be either validated or rejected through research. Kumar (2011) defined it as "…a hunch, assumption, suspicion, assertion or an idea about a phenomenon, relationship or situation, the reality or truth of which you do not know" (p. 87). This definition indicates how broad and flexible a hypothesis can be as well as the fact that it addresses a gap in knowledge or understanding that is yet to be explored and known.

2.2.7 Research Methodology

According to Mohd Sidik (2005), the research methodology informs the other party about the procedure, which the research study will follow; that is why it is considered one of the most important sections in the research proposal. It is defined as "system of methods and rules to facilitate the collection and analysis of data" (Hart, 1998, p. 28, as cited in Heath & Tynan, 2010). It is one of the most critical decisions in a study as it determines how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted, significantly influencing the study's outcomes (Mauch & Park, 2003, as cited in Heath & Tynan, 2010). A well-designed methodology ensures the reliability and validity of the research findings and provides a clear framework for addressing the research problem systematically (Heath & Tynan, 2010).

2.2.8 Data Collection Methods

According to Kothari (2004), data collection refers to the systematic gathering of the data using numerous methods, including surveys, experiments, and observations. These methods provide quantitative data which help in testing hypotheses or measuring variables. From a qualitative perspective, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) argued that data collection encompasses

methods, mainly interviews, focus groups, and observations. These methods allow researchers to gather rich and detailed data that provide insights into participants' experiences and perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In a mixed-methods research, data collection comprises both quantitative and qualitative methods, including surveys, interviews, observations, and focus groups. These methods allow researchers to gather a comprehensive set of data which combines both numerical and narrative insights (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

2.2.9 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis procedures refer to the systematic application of statistical techniques to examine, interpret, and evaluate data, which enables researchers to test hypotheses and address study objectives (Memon, 2019). In their work, they emphasized that research proposals must explicitly outline the chosen analytical methods, which differ based on the type of study. For example, in a qualitative research that uses approaches, including interviews or focus groups. The analysis involves identifying recurring patterns in responses and critically assessing these to align with the research aims. On the other hand, in a quantitative study, the focus is on interpreting numerical data through statistical tools in order to uncover the rationale behind observed results (Memon, 2019). The selection of appropriate methods ensures the reliability and validity of findings, which is tailored to the research design (Memon, 2019).

2.2.10 Ethical Considerations

According to Lune and Berg (2017), ethical considerations in research proposals refer to the principles and practices which ensure that the study is conducted respecting not only participants' rights, but also making sure it minimizes harm and maximizes benefits. This section in the research proposal outlines how researchers plan to address ethical issues; for instance,

informed consent, confidentiality, potential risks, and benefits. All of which ensure compliance with ethical standards and regulatory requirements (Lune & Berg, 2017).

2.2.11 Chapter Framework

According to Memon (2019), chapter framework is the structure of the researcher's dissertation or thesis, in which it includes not only the preliminary chapters' scheme, but also in what order they come, and the content to be included in each one of them.

2.2.12 References

Memon (2019) described this section in the research proposal as "a complete list of work of other researcher that has been cited" (p. 53). That is to say, it refers to the different sources, including articles, books, or journals, which have been reviewed and used in the research proposals' sections. They also highlighted how this section should be developed and what format should it utilize, whether it being American Psychological Association or Modern Language Association. For example, following APA style, the bibliography section is titled references rather than bibliography. The citations in this format italicize titles and capitalize major words, list authors by last name and initials, and use an author-date structure; for instance, (Smith, 2020) at the end of the text. This format is predominantly used in social sciences.

Conversely, MLA style, which is often applied in humanities, labels the references as works cited, underlines titles, and includes authors' full names. In-text MLA citations adopt an author-page format; for example, (Smith 45) without commas in between (Memon, 2019). Furthermore, Memon (2019) stressed on the importance of consistency in adhering to institutional or disciplinary guidelines when selecting a citation style, as improper formatting can undermine the credibility of the work.

2.3 Common Challenges in Developing a Research Proposal

Countless studies have explored the challenges that learners face when developing their research proposals. In a qualitative study conducted by Mali (2023), where they investigated the challenges that EFL undergraduate learners in Indonesia deal with when writing their research proposals, particularly when developing the following sections: introduction, literature review, and methods. They found that organizing ideas coherently in writing the introduction section is one of the primary difficulties that these learners confront. This finding aligns with what Alharbi (2019), Bian and Wang (2016), and Husin and Nurbayani (2017) identified regarding the challenges of writing a well-structured paragraph (as cited in Mali, 2023). In the literature review section, finding credible sources was one of the significant issues that Pardede (2019) and Yeh (2009) reported in their studies as well (as cited in Mali, 2023).

Moreover, another challenge those learners faced when developing the literature review section in their research proposals was to understand the contents of the chosen articles (Mali, 2023). This point reflects an underlying problem that is concerned with language fluency issues. In the methodology section, they often struggle with the selection of appropriate research methods, the choice of suitable instruments, and the determination of sample sizes. These challenges were also noted in Pardede (2019) and Suryatiningsih (2019) studies (as cited in Mali, 2023). Mali (2023) further identified that these difficulties are common across both face to face and online learning environments; nevertheless, there is one particular deficiency, which is evident to be present in online settings when drafting the literature review that is low motivation.

In another qualitative study conducted by Abdullah (2023), where they have researched the common challenges faced by postgraduate learners of English department at the University of Aden in Yemen during the writing process of their research proposals. Results highlighted that

these learners face several challenges when writing research proposals (Abdullah, 2023). One of the significant issues reported, is the lack of a standardized proposal format with supervisors often preferring different styles. This inconsistency left learners confused about organizing their proposals and adhering to formatting guidelines; for instance, APA style. Additionally, unclear or vague feedback from supervisors exacerbated the problem as learners frequently received shallow comments without any further explanation, which led to frustration and discouragement (Abdullah, 2023).

Another challenge was selecting a research title. Learners often lacked access to previous works for reference, resulting in unintentional topic overlaps that required title changes (Abdullah, 2023). Moreover, writing the literature review posed difficulties due to limited access to relevant sources and challenges in identifying appropriate references (Abdullah, 2023). Methodology selection was another area of concern as learners reported insufficient guidance from supervisors on choosing appropriate methods, participant numbers, or research instruments. This led to critical feedback from committees during proposal reviews, often requiring changes in methodology (Abdullah, 2023).

Furthermore, supervision issues were a recurring theme. Many learners reported that supervisors were often unavailable or busy to provide timely feedback, which would delay their progress. On top of that, inconsistent or negative comments further hindered their ability to improve their work effectively (Abdullah, 2023). Above all, accessing references was a persistent problem reported by those learners due to outdated library resources and pay walls on online platforms. Therefore, they expressed the need for better library resources or institutional subscriptions to academic databases (Abdullah, 2023).

Taking another standpoint, Diad et al. (2023) approached the subject by analyzing and identifying the psychological, socio-cultural, and linguistic factors contributing to the difficulties encountered by undergraduate learners in the English education study program at FKIP in Universitas Tanjungpura when writing their research proposals. Employing a descriptive research design, they identified that psychological factors were the most dominant, accounting for 61% of the complications. These psychological hardships included issues related to self-esteem, anxiety, and motivation (Diad et al., 2023).

Results showed that learners struggled with using proper referencing styles and selecting appropriate research topics (Diad et al., 2023). Writing literature reviews and conceptual frameworks also posed significant challenges due to a lack of reading habits and difficulty visualizing research structures (Diad et al., 2023). Anxiety was another major issue, with learners fearing mistakes in their writing or criticism from supervisors during consultations. Similar findings were reported by Khairah and Fatimah (2022) who highlighted the negative impact of anxiety on learners' performance (as cited in Diad et al., 2023).

Linguistic factors accounted for 21% of the difficulties in which learners faced challenges with grammar usage, paraphrasing, and vocabulary selection when writing in English (Wahyuningsih, 2018, as cited in Diad et al., 2023). Although grammatical competence was emphasized as critical for academic writing, many learners struggled to meet these standards (Diad et al., 2023).

Socio-cultural factors made up 18% of the obstacles, particularly in understanding feedback from supervisors. This aligns with what Dwihandini et al. (2013) found about how unclear or ambiguous supervisor feedback hinders learners' progress (as cited in Diad et al.,

2023). Thus, building effective communication between learners and supervisors was deemed essential for improving proposal quality (Diad et al., 2023).

2.4 Research Proposal Development: Writing Tips

Sundararajan (2021) provided some practical strategies for improving the clarity and effectiveness of academic writing, particularly in research proposals. They encouraged writers to use outline formats and lists to organize content and break up dense narrative texts. Moreover, they suggested employing visual aids to illustrate abstract concepts or relationships; nonetheless, these illustrations should be used sparingly so as not to overwhelm the reader. Additionally, they emphasized that each point should be stated clearly, supported adequately, and transitioned smoothly to the next without overemphasis or redundancy.

In order to help readers understand the structure and progression of the text, they recommended adopting forecasting and internal summaries as well as generously using transitions to ensure coherence, guiding the readers effectively throughout the ideas discussed. Equivocal language; for example, ought to, could, may, should, hope, will consider, or it appears should be avoided in order to maintain precision and confidence in communication (Sundararajan, 2021).

Furthermore, when dealing with potential challenges relevant to the research project, they advised writers to address them directly rather than evading them. For unrealistic promises and unsupported subjective arguments, they highlighted that it is best to be avoided as they can weaken the credibility of the research proposal. In the same vein, they drew attention to the fact that readers may not have intimate familiarity with the subject matter; hence, writers must sequence components logically for the purpose of ensuring clarity for the broader audience (Sundararajan, 2021).

Conclusion

This present chapter aimed to review the existing literature upon research proposal in order to build a comprehensive foundation about it. Therefore, it developed a general understanding of the concept of a research proposal through entailing its notable definitions by different scholars and researchers, the key purpose of developing it as well as its distinct types according to the existing literature. From another fold, it dived into its core by identifying the fundamental elements which constitute a sound research proposal. Moreover, it summarized what previous studies have explored concerning the common challenges faced by learners when developing their research proposals. Eventually, it concluded with a summary of some writing tips as cited in the literature so as to effectively develop this academic document.

Advancing the discussion, the next chapter will describe the chosen methodology for this research study from a theoretical perspective, as well as its practical application in the present study and the justification behind each main element of it, including the research design, data collection methods, data collection procedures, population, sample, and sampling technique.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three: The Research Methodology for this Study

Introduction

This chapter establishes the theoretical background upon which the research methodology is build, as well as the chosen methodology elements for this present study and its rationale. First, it begins with a discussion about the research paradigm, research approach, research design, and data collection methods in general. Movingly, it specifies each data collection method describing its structure, aim, validation and piloting process. Moreover, it expounds the data collection and analysis procedures as well as the population, sample and sampling technique. Eventually, it culminates with the study description and rationale. In short, this chapter attempts to inform the reader about not only the selected research methodology for this study in a systematic manner, but also its theoretical background and the justification behind each choice.

3.1 Research Methodology: Theoretical Background, Choices, and Rationale

Under this subtitle, the research methodology chosen for this study is outlined and supported by a brief theoretical background from the literature along with the justification behind each choice based on its alignment with the study's objective and theoretical framework.

3.1.1 Research Paradigm(s)

Research paradigms are crucial in shaping research within the social sciences field as they offer a framework that influences how researchers develop their studies, collect and analyze data, and interpret their results (Omodan, 2024). The American philosopher Thomas Kuhn (1962) was the first one to use and popularize the term paradigm in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* in which he introduced it as a philosophical way of thinking (as cited in Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Omodan (2024) defined a research paradigm as "...a worldview that forms the basis for understanding or interpreting a particular subject, phenomenon, or discipline" (p. 1). According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), a research paradigm influences how individuals

perceive and understand a particular subject as it demonstrates a collection of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices. Additionally, organizing knowledge, guiding research methodologies, and addressing problems within specific disciplines are the foundational structure that the research paradigm serves as (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). According to Davies and Fisher (2018), a research paradigm acts as the foundation, which enables researchers to interpret their studies and identify what knowledge holds validity and significance within their discipline (as cited in Omodan, 2024). This aligns with Raines's (2013) assertion, that a paradigm encompasses the assumptions, beliefs, and methods that the researchers utilize in their investigations (as cited in Omodan, 2024).

Research paradigms act as lenses through which researchers view the world, providing distinct perspectives and theoretical orientations that shape the research process (Park et al., 2020, as cited in Omodan, 2024). By adopting a specific paradigm, researchers align with philosophical underpinnings that guide their knowledge creation, enhancing rigor and validity in their investigations (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013, as cited in Omodan, 2024). Moreover, paradigms foster interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration, promoting intellectual growth and knowledge expansion in the social sciences field (Omodan, 2024).

On a different note, research paradigms play a crucial role in addressing practical societal challenges (Omodan, 2024). Mertens (2007) stated that a researcher may employ a critical/transformative paradigm to examine societal power structures for social change (as cited in Omodan, 2024). Interpretive research explores subjective meanings (Adil et al., 2022, as cited in Omodan, 2024), whereas a postcolonial indigenous paradigm addresses the impacts of colonialism (Chilisa, 2019, as cited in Omodan, 2024). Pragmatism combines quantitative and qualitative data to inform policy (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019, as cited in Omodan, 2024). Thus, the

choice of a paradigm reflects a commitment to making meaningful contributions to society (Omodan, 2024). Furthermore, Omodan (2024) argued that the understanding of research paradigms is crucial for learners and researchers in the social sciences field as it enables them to critically evaluate literature, comprehend theoretical frameworks, and situate their research within the broader scholarly landscape (Omodan, 2024). Adequate knowledge of research paradigms allows researchers to identify gaps in knowledge, formulate innovative research questions, and contribute to ongoing scholarly dialogue (Omodan, 2024).

According to Candy (1989), research paradigm can be classified into three main taxonomies: positivist, interpretivist, or critical paradigm. Nevertheless, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003a; 2003b) suggested a fourth one, that is, pragmatic paradigm (as cited in Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It integrates elements from each one of aforementioned paradigms. On the other hand, Creswell (2009) and Lincoln et al. (2011) argued that there are different research paradigms in the social sciences field, namely, post-positivism, constructivism, participatory action frameworks, or pragmatism (as cited in Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). The latter is a philosophical approach, which was first publicly discussed by William James in 1898, who credited Charles Sanders Peirce as his source (Maxcy, 2003; Ormerod, 2006, as cited in Kaushik & Walsh, 2019).

The term pragmatism originates from the Greek word pragma that denotes action, which is central to this philosophy (Pansiri, 2005, as cited in Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Pragmatists, influenced by thinkers including John Dewey, emphasize that actions are inseparable from their contexts and consequences, which shape the researchers' beliefs and understanding of reality (Morgan, 2014a, as cited in Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Additionally, pragmatism posits that reality

is dynamic and that actions are crucial for changing existence (Goldkuhl, 2012; Maxcy, 2003, as cited in Kaushik & Walsh, 2019).

As a research paradigm, pragmatism serves as a flexible tool for addressing real-world problems effectively (Biesta, 2010; Maxcy, 2003; Rorty, 2000, as cited in Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). This is why this particular paradigm is deemed appropriate for this study as it addresses a real-world phenomenon, that is, writer's block. This problem necessitates flexibility in approach and a focus on actionable insights. Moreover, the research aims and questions of this study are not limited to one research aspect; therefore, pragmatism, which offers the freedom to use mixed methods by combining the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research, fits to answer the research questions for this present study.

3.1.2 Research Approach(es)

Creswell and Creswell (2018) described research approaches as "...plans and the procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation" (p.40). They emphasized that this plan should include multiple decisions, which must be ordered logically throughout the research process. According to them, there are three research approaches, namely qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. However, they argued that the former two approaches should not be seen as mutually exclusive or dichotomous. Instead, they exist on a continuum, with studies often leaning more towards one approach than the other (Creswell, 2015; Newman & Benz, 1998, as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018). On the other hand, mixed methods research occupies a middle ground on this continuum as it integrates elements from both qualitative and quantitative approaches, offering a flexible framework for research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated that qualitative research is an approach, which aims to explore and understand human or social problems by developing research questions and procedures through which they collect data in participants' natural settings. Therefore, the collected data get analyzed inductively in order to identify general themes from specific details. This approach values an inductive style, focuses on individual meaning, and emphasizes capturing the complexity of situations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Conversely, quantitative research is a systematic approach, which examines the relationship between variables in order to test objective theories. These variables are measured using structured instruments in order to produce numerical data that can be analyzed statistically (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Moreover, quantitative research relies on deductive reasoning to test theories, controls for bias, and alternative explanations, as well as to emphasize generalizability and replicability of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

On the other hand, mixed methods research is an approach that involves collecting and integrating both quantitative and qualitative data within a single study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to them, the fundamental premise of mixed methods is the fact that it combines both qualitative and quantitative data, which provides deeper insights than either approach alone.

The nature of the research problem, the researchers' personal experience, and the audience for the study, as well as the research worldview, design, and methods, are what determines the selection of an appropriate research approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Creswell and Creswell (2018) defined a research problem as "...an issue or concern that needs to be addressed" (p. 57). This problem can be identified through gaps in literature, conflicts in results, neglect of specific aspects in a topic, or real-world issues (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to them,

quantitative approach is used when the researcher aims to identify factors influencing outcomes, evaluate interventions, predict outcomes, or test theories.

Contrariwise, qualitative approach is suitable for exploring and understanding a phenomena in cases where little prior research exists, the sample is understudied, or key variables are unknown (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Mixed methods approach; on the other hand, is applied when neither of the aforementioned research approaches is sufficient alone to fully address the investigated problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Additionally, the researchers' personal training and experiences play a role in determining the research approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For instance, researchers who are competent in technical writing, statistics, and statistical software often lean towards quantitative approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). On the contrary, qualitative approach is gravitated by those who prefer literary writing, conducting interviews, or making observations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For mixed methods approach, it is often chosen by researchers who have the time and resources to collect and analyze both types of data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Moreover, the expectation of the intended audience and their familiarity with qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method approach should be taken into consideration when selecting the research approach for the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Taking the aforementioned criteria into consideration, the mixed-methods approach is seen compatible in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the present research study as it seeks to measure the prevalence and identify the causes and impact of writer's block, which is a complex phenomenon, within an understudied sample, that is, EFL Master Two students at Biskra University. Furthermore, the researcher's orientation and experience supports the integration of this particular approach since they are both skilled in statistics and keen for literary

writing and conducting interviews. Even more, the intended audience for this work is aware and knowledgeable about this mixed methods approach.

3.1.3 Research Design(s)

Once a researcher chose how to approach their study, following a qualitative method, which focuses on understanding and exploring phenomena, a quantitative one, that highlight numbers and statistics, or a combination of both, which is known as mixed methods. They have to select a specific research design within their chosen research approach as each approach has specific types of studies that they can choose from. These are known as designs, which are step-by-step blueprints, guiding the researcher in conducting their study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

A research design is the framework, blueprint, or plan which is followed in conducting a study, mainly in guiding the data collection and analysis procedure (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). Creswell (2009) provided a similar definition entailing that it refers to the plan that guides the research study as it covers the whole research process. Choosing the appropriate research design depends on a set of criteria, including the researcher's beliefs, the strategies they intent to use, the methods for gathering the data, the nature of the research problem, their own experience, and who will read or use the results (Creswell, 2009).

Accordingly, Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested three types of research designs: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. During the late 19th and 20th centuries, quantitative research methods were developed mainly in psychology following a scientific approach known as the post-positivist worldview. These methods include true experiments, where participants are randomly assigned to groups, and quasi-experiments, which are less strict in design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963, as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018). On the other hand, single-subject

experiments focus on applying treatments to one or a few individuals over time (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007; Neuman & McCormick, 1995, as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Additionally, other non experimental approaches encompass causal-comparative research, which compares groups based on causes that have already occurred whereas correlational research examines relationships between variables (Creswell, 2012, as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, two common designs are surveys, which gather data from samples to describe trends (Fowler, 2008, as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018), and experiments, which test if specific treatments affect outcomes (Keppel, 1991, as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018) as shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1

Alternative Research Designs

Table 1.2 Alternative Research Designs		
Quantitative	**Qualitative**	**Mixed Methods**
• Experimental designs • Nonexperimental designs, such as surveys • Longitudinal designs	• Narrative research • Phenomenology • Grounded theory • Ethnographies • Case study	• Convergent • Explanatory sequential • Exploratory sequential • Complex designs with embedded core designs

Note. From Creswell & Creswell, (2018), p. 49

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research became more defined during the 1990s and into the 21st century, drawing from fields, namely anthropology, sociology, the humanities, and evaluation (as cited in Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Riessman (2008) mentioned that various research designs have been discussed in literature, including narrative research, which involves collecting and retelling individuals' life stories so as to understand their experiences (as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Phenomenological research which focuses on the description of the shared lived experiences of

people regarding a phenomenon, often through the use of interviews (Moustakas, 1994; Giorgi, 2009, as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Furthermore, grounded theory which seeks to develop general theories grounded in participants' views through systematic data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2007, 2015, as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Ethnography is another qualitative research design which studies the behaviors, language, and culture of groups in their natural settings over time through observation and interviews (Fetterman, 2010; Wolcott, 2008, as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Case study research, which provides an in-depth examination of a specific case; for example, a program or event, using multiple data sources over a defined period (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009, 2012, 2014, as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) and Cheek (2004) added other qualitative methods, namely participatory action research and discourse analysis which offer further ways to explore human experiences and meanings (as cited in Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Mixed methods design combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches within a single study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Even though it began in the 1980s officially, its roots trace back earlier (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The idea behind mixed methods is that using both types of data helps balance out the weaknesses and biases of each (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This led to the concept of triangulation, which seeks to find agreement between qualitative and quantitative findings (Jick, 1979, as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By the early 1990s, mixed methods evolved into a more systematic approach focused on integrating both types of data through various research designs (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Regardless of the numerous mixed method research design subtypes, Creswell and Creswell (2018) highlighted only the following ones: convergent mixed methods design, explanatory sequential mixed methods design, and exploratory sequential mixed methods design.

Based on distinct features related to timing, sequence, and integration of qualitative and quantitative data, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) identified six major mixed methods research designs (as cited in Cohen et al., 2018). In the convergent parallel design, quantitative and qualitative data are collected independently and at the same time, after that they are merged for comparison and comprehensive analysis, allowing for triangulation and complementarily of findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, as cited in Cohen et al., 2018).

On the contrary, explanatory sequential design starts with the collection and analysis of quantitative data, followed by qualitative data collection to explain or build on the quantitative results, making the sequence important for understanding the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, as cited in Cohen et al., 2018). Unlike the precedent type, in exploratory sequential design, the qualitative data are collected and analyzed first, usually with a small sample size. Therefore, the findings are used to inform the subsequent quantitative phase, which typically involves a larger sample to generalize results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, Cohen et al., 2018).

Furthermore, embedded design is another type in which either the qualitative or quantitative data are embedded within a larger study that primarily uses the other type in order to provide complimentary information. In this design, the embedded data can be collected concurrently or sequentially, and priority is usually given to one of these types of data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, Cohen et al., 2018).

Moreover, transformative design is the one guided by a specific theoretical framework, often with a political or social justice agenda. This design integrates quantitative and qualitative

methods to advance the interests of marginalized or underrepresented groups (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, Cohen et al., 2018).

The sixth and final design is called multiphase design, which involves a series of connected studies or phases, using concurrent and/or sequential collection of quantitative and qualitative data, with each phase building on the previous one in order to address complex research questions incrementally (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, Cohen et al., 2018).

Taking into account, the chosen research approach for this study, which entails the use of both quantitative and qualitative data, the researcher's orientation, the data collection methods that are used to collect both types of data independently, an embedded mixed methods case study research design is deemed compatible as the results will not be generalized to the entire population, but rather strictly bounded to the sample size chosen due to the complexity of the phenomenon being investigated, that is, writer's block.

Therefore, utilizing these two types of data gives the researcher the ability to understand and view the researched problem from different perspectives and research lenses (Shorten & Smith, 2017). Additionally, the qualitative data in this study is embedded within the quantitative one since the participants chosen to sit for the interviews are deducted from the questionnaire's respondents; in other words, the qualitative data is integrated within the study's research design enriching the quantitative side as well as adding more depth to it as it directly depends on and complements it.

3.1.4 Data Collection Method(s)

According to Sapthami (2020), data collection methods are the instruments used by researchers to collect data, which could vary in their complexity, design, administration and interpretation. Data collection methods are broadly categorized into primary and secondary tools

(Taherdoost, 2021). Taherdoost (2021) defined primary data as first-hand information, which are collected directly by researchers for a specific purpose. This type of data is considered more valid, reliable, objective, and authentic compared to secondary ones (Taherdoost, 2021).

There are various primary data collection methods, including experiments, surveys, interviews, and questionnaires as shown in Figure 3.2. Nevertheless, primary data can be costly, time-consuming, and challenging due to the need for precise definitions and standards during the data collection process (Taherdoost, 2021).

On the other hand, secondary data are the type of data which consist of information gathered from published sources; for instance, books, articles, and records (see Figure 3.2) (Taherdoost, 2021). These data are commonly used in drafting literature reviews in order to provide background information about studies (Taherdoost, 2021). Even though this type of data is easier and cheaper to use, researchers have to carefully evaluate its validity and reliability in advance to ensure authentic results (Taherdoost, 2021).

Figure 3.2

Data Collection Methods
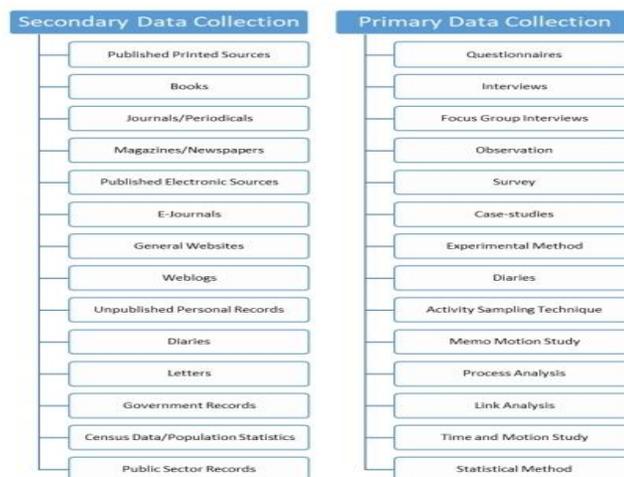
FIGURE I. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Note. From Taherdoost, (2021), p. 13

Choosing the appropriate data collection method depends on various factors, including the research purpose, questions, and practical considerations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Creswell and Creswell (2018) emphasized that the research problem and objectives should be prior outlined since they guide the decision of whether a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approach is appropriate.

Quantitative data collection methods are usually used to test hypotheses or measure variables through structured instruments; for example, surveys or experiments, which would produce numerical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In contrast, the qualitative ones are compatible for exploring complex phenomena and understanding individuals' experiences, gathering rich, textual, or visual data through the use of interviews, observations, or document analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Mixed methods data collection methods combine both approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Additionally, practical factors, including time, resources, access to participants, and ethical considerations contribute to the choice of the data collection method to be used (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, the type of data needed to be collected, whether it being qualitative or quantitative, needs to be taken into consideration as well in choosing the appropriate data collection method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

For this present study, the researcher decided to use two data collection methods, a structured questionnaire in order to collect quantitative data, and semi-structured interviews for qualitative depth insights upon the investigated phenomenon, that is, writer's block. The reasoning behind this decision was not arbitrary, but rather based on the aligned research aims,

questions, and the type of data needed to be collected in order to fully and appropriately answer the raised research questions.

      3.1.4.1 The Questionnaire. One of the common data collection methods is the questionnaire (Taherdoost, 2021). Sapthami (2020) defined it as "...a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents" (p. 17). Sir Francis Galton was the first one to design and utilize this data collection method (Sapthami, 2020; Taherdoost, 2021). Additionally, Sapthami (2020) and Taherdoost (2021) argued that even though a questionnaire is commonly used to gather quantitative data; it can also be used to obtain qualitative insights. Moreover, questionnaire could be seen as cheaper and easier to construct compared to other data collection methods (Sapthami, 2020).

      According to Taherdoost (2021), a questionnaire can be classified according to the type of questions and administration modes. Question types can be divided into closed-ended and open-ended formats (Sapthami, 2020; Taherdoost, 2021). Quantitative questions are closed-ended as they provide respondents with a fixed set of answer options, making the data collection process quicker and easier (Sapthami, 2020; Taherdoost, 2021). The response options for this type of question should be varied and inclusive as it could be "...dichotomous, where the respondent has two options, nominal-polytomous, where the respondent has more than two unordered options, ordinal-polytomous, where the respondent has more than two ordered options, [or] continuous (bounded), where the respondent is presented with a continuous scale" (Sapthami, 2020, p. 18). On the contrary, qualitative questions are open-ended since they require respondents to formulate their own answers (Sapthami, 2020; Taherdoost, 2021). This type of question is common in

qualitative research and has to be coded into response scales afterwards (Sapthami, 2020; Taherdoost, 2019, as cited in Taherdoost, 2021).

Questionnaires can be administered through various modes; for instance, face-to-face distribution using paper-and-pencil formats, or computerized versions, using telephone, online platforms, or postal mail (Kabir, 2016, as cited in Taherdoost, 2021). Furthermore, Taherdoost (2021) stated that online questionnaires are cost-effective and easier to distribute and collect data; however, technical problems, namely internet access, may risk excluding participants. Ethical considerations, mainly participants' confidentiality should be ensured at all costs regardless of the type of mode used to distribute the questionnaire (Kabir, 2016, as cited in Taherdoost, 2021).

3.1.4.1.1 Structure and Aim. The aim of the questionnaire is to determine the prevalence of writer's block among EFL Master Two students at Biskra University. This data collection method intends to obtain numerical data; therefore, it consists of eight close-ended questions, in which some of them are dichotomous, multiple-choice, and Likert scales ones.

The questionnaire is constructed in a logical manner respecting both academic and guideline conventions. It has a title which represents the type and the target audience for answering it, that is, students' self-report questionnaire. Thereafter, it starts off with an introduction, which kindly invites the participants to participate in the study, appreciates their contribution, explains briefly but precisely what the study is about, and ensures their responses anonymity and confidentiality.

Furthermore, it is divided into three main sections. Section one is about participants' personal information so as to gather demographic information, which would add more context to the data collected. Section two contains questions about respondents' academic background in order to identify their level of education and understand how it could influence the study's

findings. Section three, which is the main section in the questionnaire, focuses on writer's block. It contains three main questions for the purpose of collecting quantitative data upon the prevalence, persistence and intensity of writer's block.

3.1.4.1.2 Validation. Validity is a crucial aspect of effective research as it determines the worthiness of the study (Cohen, et al., 2018). It refers to the degree to which a research instrument accurately measures what it is supposed to measure (Winter, 2000, as cited in Cohen, et al., 2018).

For the first data collection method used in this present study, that is, a questionnaire. After it has been constructed; it has been sent to five experts for face and content validity, in which the questionnaire has been attached to an opinionnaire including questions about the comprehensiveness of the questionnaire, clarity and structure, organization, repetitiveness, irrelevance, grammar and spelling accuracy, length appropriateness, ambiguity, layout evaluation, time allocation reasonability, and suggestions. In about a week, feedback has been received from two internal experts and one external expert, in which it contained positive feedback with no further recommendations or suggestions for improvements.

3.1.4.1.3 Piloting. Following the validation stage, the questionnaire has been converted to a Google form sheet; therefore, it has been sent online to 10 participants from the population for the piloting stage in order to test how the questionnaire performs with actual respondents and addresses usability and functionality. Moreover, it has been attached to an opinionnaire, which was different from the first one used in the validation stage as for this stage it included questions about clarity, response time, comfort and engagement, technical issues and suggestions for improvement.

Based on how the participants answered the questionnaire and their feedback responses in the opinionnaire; the researcher has pointed out some deficiencies in the understanding of some questions as they were misinterpreted. Therefore, some adjustments had to be made, which included restating some questions using simpler vocabulary and adding brief definitions for some technical terms so as to avoid confusion. With that being said, neither these participants nor their responses were included in the final data collection.

3.1.4.2 The Interview. Interviews are one of the data collection methods, in which the researcher aims to obtain information, opinions or observations from other people through either verbal or nonverbal conversations (Sapthami, 2020). They can be conducted in different ways, whether individual or group face-to-face interactions as they could be done online via telephone or computer devices (Kabir, 2016; Pandey & Pandey, 2015, as cited in Taherdoost, 2021). Interviews can be recorded variously, either using the traditional manner of self-reporting and notes taking while conducting it or tape-recording it (Taherdoost, 2021). Additionally, they can be used to collect both types of data, as they could include open-ended and closed-ended questions (Taherdoost, 2021).

According to Sapthami (2020) and Taherdoost (2021), there are three distinct types of interviews: structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. Structured interviews are the type of interviews in which the researcher prepares in advance a fixed set of questions, which will be asked during the interview in a logical and consistent manner (Sapthami, 2020; Taherdoost, 2021). These questions are mostly closed-ended with a few open-ended questions (Sapthami, 2020; Taherdoost, 2021). Moreover, the interviewer, in this type of interview, does not provide their opinion as they play a neutral role while conducting it (Sapthami, 2020). This type of interviews is best used when there is a comprehensive literature upon the investigated topic,

which would help the researcher to learn enough about it so as to create clear and useful questions with fixed answer options (Sapthami, 2020; Taherdoost, 2021).

Semi-structured interviews are formal types of interviews with a guide of set of questions prepared in advance. However, unlike structured interviews, the interviewer or researcher has the right to deviate and ask some probing questions if deemed necessary in order to gather more depth insights upon the investigated problem. Therefore, this type of interviews contains both open-ended and closed-ended questions. According to Bernard (1988), semi-structured interviews are seen compatible when the researcher does not have more than one chance to interview the participants or have to conduct numerous ones (as cited in Sapthami, 2020). For this type of interviews, it is discussed that it would be more convenient to tape record it rather than traditionally jot notes since it might affect the interviewer attention, so they would not be as attentive to the interviewees' answers in order to ask appropriate probing questions (Sapthami, 2020).

On the other hand, "Unstructured interviews are informal methods of interviewing without using a specific structure" (Taherdoost, 2021, p. 19). That is, the interviewer does not prepare any guide of questions prior to the interview, but rather engage in the conversation based on the goal and focus of the interview by asking open ended questions so as to invite the interviewee to open up (Sapthami, 2020; Taherdoost, 2021). This kind of interviews are mostly used when there is little to none information about the chosen phenomenon (Taherdoost, 2021). Moreover, it is advised to tape record this type of interviews since it contains several open-ended questions which might be overwhelming to keep track of (Sapthami, 2020).

3.1.4.2.1 Structure and Aim. The aim behind the interview is to identify the main causes contributing to writer's block and its impact on the progress and quality of EFL Master Two

students' research proposal development. In other words, unlike the questionnaire, the interviews were conducted to collect qualitative insights; that is why the researcher opted for semi-structured interviews so as to have the flexibility to gain deeper insights from the participants' experience with the complex investigated phenomenon, that is, writer's block.

As has been discussed earlier, semi-structured interviews have a guide of prepared questions to follow throughout the interview. Accordingly, the researcher has developed 12 comprehensive questions, which include both open-ended and closed-ended ones. This set of questions does not start off immediately with the study's core questions, instead it paves the way by asking some introductory questions in order to break the ice between the researcher and the interviewee, and movingly it asks the main questions. Subsequently, it concludes with two questions asking about participants' suggestions and recommendations concerning any neglected questions.

3.1.4.2.2 Validation. Right after the completion of the structuring of the semi-structured interview questions, they have been sent to five experts, attached to an opinionnaire similar to the one, which has been used for the questionnaire's validation stage. After five days, two feedback from internal experts and an external one have been received entailing the number of questions is a bit excessive for a semi-structured interview, taking into consideration the fact that there would be some probing questions as well. These remarks have been taken into consideration so as not to face any inconveniences while conducting these interviews. Hence, the set of questions have been revisited and minimized to include nine questions.

3.1.4.2.3 Piloting. Despite the completing of the validation stage for this data collection method, the researcher was not able to pilot it due to shortage in participants' availability and time constraints.

3.1.5 Data Collection Procedures

According to Sapthami (2020), data collection procedure is seen as one of the most important stages when conducting a research. They described it as "...the middle compartment between formulation of research problem and results of research" (p. 6). Data collection procedure is the process of collecting information from primary or secondary sources in order to answer research questions, test hypotheses, or review conclusions (Sapthami, 2020). Furthermore, Sapthami (2020) argued that both appropriate selection of data collection methods and proper use of it would ensure reliable data, leading to trustworthy conclusions.

For this present study, data were collected through the use of structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews in order to gather both quantitative and qualitative insights. Accordingly, once the questionnaire has been constructed; it has been distributed online using Google form sheets to the population sample. Following a period of two weeks and three days, the anticipated number of respondents has been reached. Subsequently, the researcher has selected five participants, who have reported experiencing writer's block during the process of developing their research proposal, from the questionnaire's respondents in order to sit for the interview. Three semi-structured interviews have been conducted face-to-face at the level of the researcher's faculty, and two were done online using WhatsApp audio calls. They were all audio-recorded through the use of smart phone's memo as the nature of this interview demands this technique for the researcher to be as attentive and engaged with the interviewee's responses.

3.1.6 Data Analysis Procedures

Once the data are collected, they must go through the following stage, that is, data analysis. Taherdoost (2020) stated, "Data analysis is simply the process of converting the gathered data to meaningful information" (p. 1). Nevertheless, before doing so, these data have to

be cleaned and organized (Taherdoost, 2020). Taherdoost (2020) categorized the process of data preparation into four steps. Data coding involves converting information into numerical values using a codebook that defines variables, scales, and coding schemes. Data entry is the second step where these coded values get inserted into text files, spreadsheets, or directly into statistical software (Bhattacherjee, 2012, as cited in Taherdoost, 2020). The third one is called missing data, in which this type of data is handled by assigning specific codes or applying techniques like list-wise deletion to manage incomplete responses (Bhattacherjee, 2012, as cited in Taherdoost, 2020). Data transformation is the fourth step, which is not always required; for instance, reversing coded items to align them properly with the constructs being measured before analysis (Bhattacherjee, 2012, as cited in Taherdoost, 2020). Thereafter, the researcher can start the analysis of these data according to its type (Taherdoost, 2020).

For numerical data, its analysis can be categorized into six main methods: descriptive, exploratory, inferential, predictive, explanatory or causal, or mechanistic (Taherdoost, 2020). Consequently, the numerical data collected, using the questionnaire for this present study, are analyzed using descriptive analysis. Taherdoost (2020) explained, "This method summarizes the data to reach a simple presentation as a result" (p. 3). This type of analysis utilizes different statistical techniques, namely frequency, central tendency, and dispersion (Taherdoost, 2020). Frequency shows how often each value appears in the data (Taherdoost, 2020). Central tendency, on the other hand, finds the most typical value using the mean, which is also known as the average, median which is the middle value, or mode that is the most common value (Taherdoost, 2020). Additionally, dispersion is another statistical tool which measures how spread out the values are, using range, which is the difference between highest and lowest values, variance, which refers to how much values differ from the average, and standard deviation, which is the

square root of variance (Taherdoost, 2020). These calculations can either be done manually or using software; for instance, SPSS which would make it easier to conduct (Taherdoost, 2020).

Alternatively, the qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews are analyzed distinctly as they differ from the numerical ones (Taherdoost, 2020). "Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative analysis. It is used to analyze classifications and present themes that relate to the data" (Boyatzis, 1998, as cited in Alhojailan, 2012, p. 40). Braun and Clarke (2006), defined it as a data analysis method, which identify, analyze and report repeated patterns within qualitative data set (as cited in Kiger and Varpio, 2020). It is seen compatible for finding common ideas or patterns in a group's experiences or thoughts; however, it is not ideal for exploring unique views from just one person (Braun & Clarke, 2012, as cited in Kiger & Varpio, 2020). It shares similar steps with other qualitative methods like grounded theory and ethnography, focusing on coding and identifying themes in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012, as cited in Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

According to Kiger and Varpio (2020), the process of thematic analysis goes through structured six stages. The first stage is getting familiarized with the data through review, reading, or listening. The second stage entails generating initial codes. Right after, the researcher starts identifying main themes. Reviewing these identified themes is the fourth stage of this process. Subsequently, the researcher defines and gives names to these themes. The final step involves writing the final analysis and description of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2012, as cited in Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

Moreover, Alhojailan (2012) emphasized that software, including NVivo can be used in the data analysis process as they provide help in organizing and grouping the data into themes more effectively rather than the manual method. Regarding this, the present study utilizes

MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2023 software so as to transcribe, organize, code and identify key themes within the collected data efficiently and time-effectively.

3.1.7 Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique

Neuman (2013) defined population as "...the abstract idea of a large group of many cases from which a researcher draws a sample and to which results from a sample are generalized" (p. 247). On the other hand, a sample is a small set derived from the whole population (Neuman, 2013). Sapthami (2020) described it as a limited set of items which can be studied instead of the entire population. According to Sapthami (2020), sampling technique refers to the systematic approach of selecting a representative sample from the entire population in order to conduct a study. The purpose behind it lies in four main points (Sapthami, 2020). It ensures better accuracy of results by studying a smaller and manageable set of the population. Accordingly, it is more time efficient. Moreover, sampling reduces expenses by focusing on a smaller group, ideal for researchers with limited budgets. Over and above all, it is considered more convenient due to the simplification of the research process, allowing for a more focused and streamlined approach (Sapthami, 2020).

Taherdoost (2016) classified sampling techniques into two types: probability sampling and non probability sampling as shown in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3

Sampling Techniques
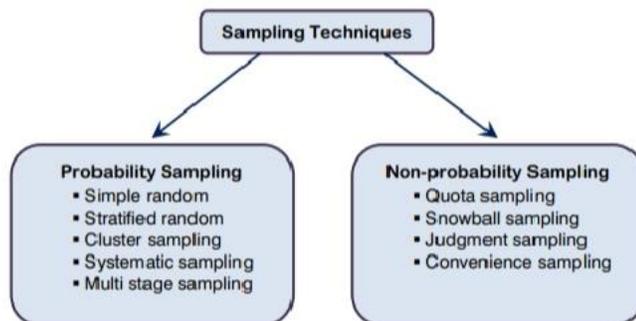
FIGURE 12: SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

Note. From Taherdoost, (2016), p. 20

Probability sampling is the process of selecting participants randomly yet representatively; in other words, it gives every individual from the population an equal chance of being selected for the study (Taherdoost, 2016). In contrast, non probability sampling focuses on the depth rather than the breadth; therefore, the sample chosen does not have to be random nor representative as the results obtained using this technique will not be generalized to the entire population unlike probability sampling in which the results are to be generalized (Taherdoost, 2016).

Bearing in mind the aim of this study is not to generalize the results; it has been conducted with a subset of participants from the population, which consists of EFL students at Biskra University. Accordingly, non-probability sampling technique is employed. Specifically, purposive sampling technique, which "as its name suggests, a purposive sample has been chosen for a specific purpose" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 219). Maxwell (1996) defined it as "...a strategy in which particular settings persons or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that cannot be obtained from other choices" (as cited in Taherdoost, 2016, p. 23).

Given the nature of this study, which encompasses two folds, 40 Master Two students of English were chosen based on the inclusion criterion of having developing research proposals in order to constitute the sample size for this research study. As for the semi-structured interviews, five participants were selected from the questionnaire's respondents, who have reported experiencing writer's block during the development of their research proposal.

3.2 Study Description and Rationale

The researched phenomenon of this study has sprung from the researcher's personal experience and interest in understanding the challenges that EFL learners face during their academic writing tasks. This interest was further developed by observations drawn from classmates' experiences during the development of their research proposals. The motivation behind this research emerges from the significant role that research proposal plays in EFL Master Two learners' academic journey as it is the foundation upon which their future dissertations are built. Furthermore, the potential academic setbacks due to writer's block underline the importance of addressing this issue.

Writer's block is a common issue among EFL academic writers, significantly impacting their academic progress and well-being. Research highlighted distinct writing challenges faced by EFL learners, such as grammar, vocabulary, and coherence problems. Specific difficulties in academic writing, including organizing ideas and maintaining academic style, have also been identified. Moreover, lack of practice and experience in writing is often cited as a contributing factor to writing difficulties.

While there is some literature focusing on the challenges that EFL learners face when developing their research proposals such as language proficiency and lack of experience, there is still a gap in understanding the prevalence, causes, and impact of writer's block on the progress

and quality of research proposal development specifically within the Algerian context. Research proposal development itself presents unique challenges such as narrowing a broad topic, conducting a comprehensive literature review, managing information overload, and maintaining motivation. EFL learners further face additional hurdles, including language-related problems, as well as difficulties in understanding and following proper academic conventions. These problems can exacerbate writer's block and significantly hinder their academic progress.

Therefore, this study aims to fill in this neglected gap in literature by investigating how common writer's block is among EFL Master Two students at Biskra University, what are the main causes behind it, and what is its impact on the progress and quality of the research proposal. Understanding this complex issue from these three aspects can help educators and institutions develop effective supporting strategies. These strategies can improve learners' academic performance, reduce stress, and enhance their overall educational experience. The findings of this study will provide a clearer picture of the significance of this problem, informing authorities about the need for targeted interventions and more importantly creating a more supportive academic environment for those EFL Master Two students, contributing to their success and well-being.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher presented a theoretical background upon the key aspects of research methodology. Moreover, specific choices for main aspect of the methodology section have been discussed and justified.

Following this chapter, the next one will be dedicated for the fieldwork and data analysis, in which the collected data will be presented, analyzed and interpreted for the purpose of drawing conclusions.

Chapter Four

Chapter Four: Fieldwork and Data Analysis

Introduction

This chapter aims to transform the raw collected data, both quantitative and qualitative, into meaningful insights which would help gain a rounded understanding of the complex phenomenon being investigated. As the research process is systematic in nature, the researcher follows a set of structured guidelines into the analysis and interpretation of these data. To begin with, the researcher presents the results obtained via the structured questionnaire using frequency distribution tables, pie charts, and bar graphs with the aid of Microsoft Excel. As for the qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews, it is presented and summarized into themes and patterns through the guidance of MAXQDA software. Following this, the researcher commences the process of analysis and interpretation of the summarized results by building a bridge from numbers and narratives in order to draw conclusions about the frequency, causes, and impact of writer's block on EFL Master Two students' research proposal development.

4.1 The Results

The following subtitles aim to present and describe the results obtained via the structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews using percentages, frequency distribution tables, and visual representations, namely pie charts and graphs, as well as thematic analysis, coding, and categorization in order to summarize the findings effectively.

4.1.1 Results of the Students' Self-Report Structured Questionnaire

The students' self-report structured questionnaire gathered data upon the prevalence of writer's block targeting not only its prevalence, but also its frequency and duration, through three main sections for the purpose of drawing a comprehensive understanding upon the multifaceted phenomenon that is writer's block. These data are analyzed using descriptive statistics, tables, and graphs.

Section One: Personal Information

This section focuses on gathering participants' essential personal details in order to understand their academic background and experience with English as a foreign language. It consists of two closed-ended questions with a set of predefined options for the participants to choose from, also known as multiple-choice questions. The first question pinpoints their field of study, whether in sciences of language or civilization and literature. The second question delves into the amount of time they have been studying English as a foreign language with four time-frame options ranging from one to three years to over a decade. These details lay the groundwork for understanding the participants' profiles and analyzing their input effectively.

Q1: Would you please specify your field of study?

Table 4.1

Field of Study

Option	Frequency	Percentage
a) Sciences of Language	31	77.5%
b) Civilization and Literature	9	22.5%
Total	40	100%

Figure 4.1

Field of Study
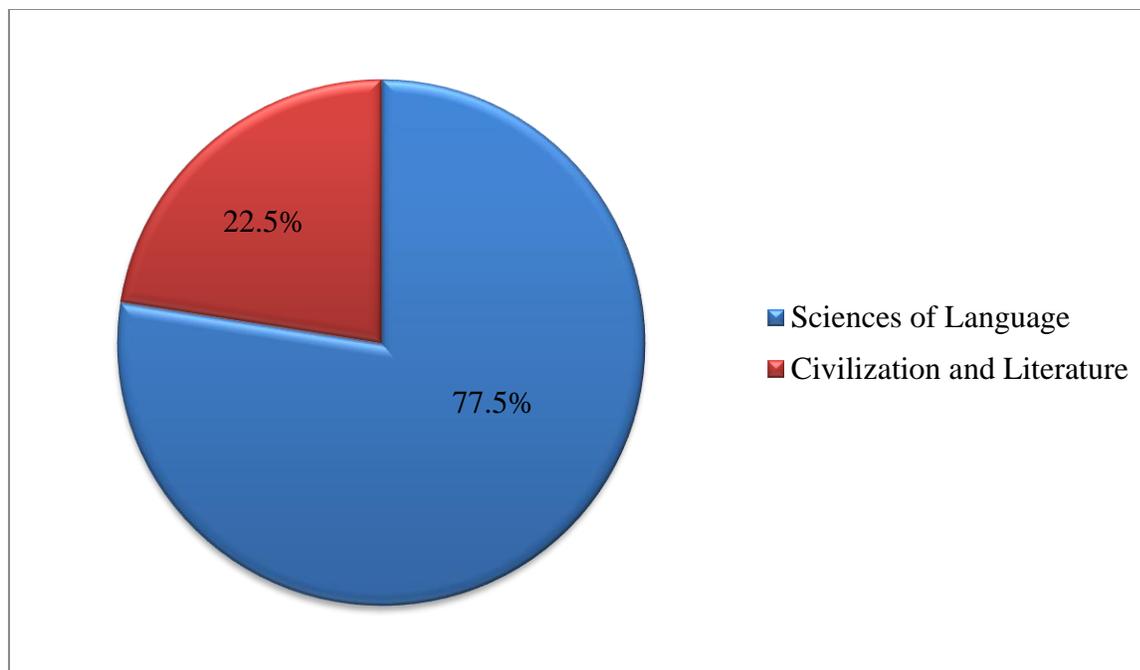
The first question item in this section determines each student's field of study which would help in understanding the sample's orientation. Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 represent the summary of the participants' responses. Interestingly, it is observed that a significant majority, representing 77.5% of the total (100%), includes 31 students from the sciences of language field. On the other hand, 22.5% are students from civilization and literature, compromising nine students. This shows how prominent the field of sciences of language is compared to civilization and literature.

Q2: How many years have you been studying English as a foreign language (EFL)?

Table 4.2

Students' experience with English as a Foreign Language

Option	Frequency	Percentage
a) 1-3 years	2	5%
b) 4-6 years	16	40%
c) 7-9 years	10	25%
d) More than 10 years	12	30%
Total	40	100%

Figure 4.2

Students' experience with English as a Foreign Language
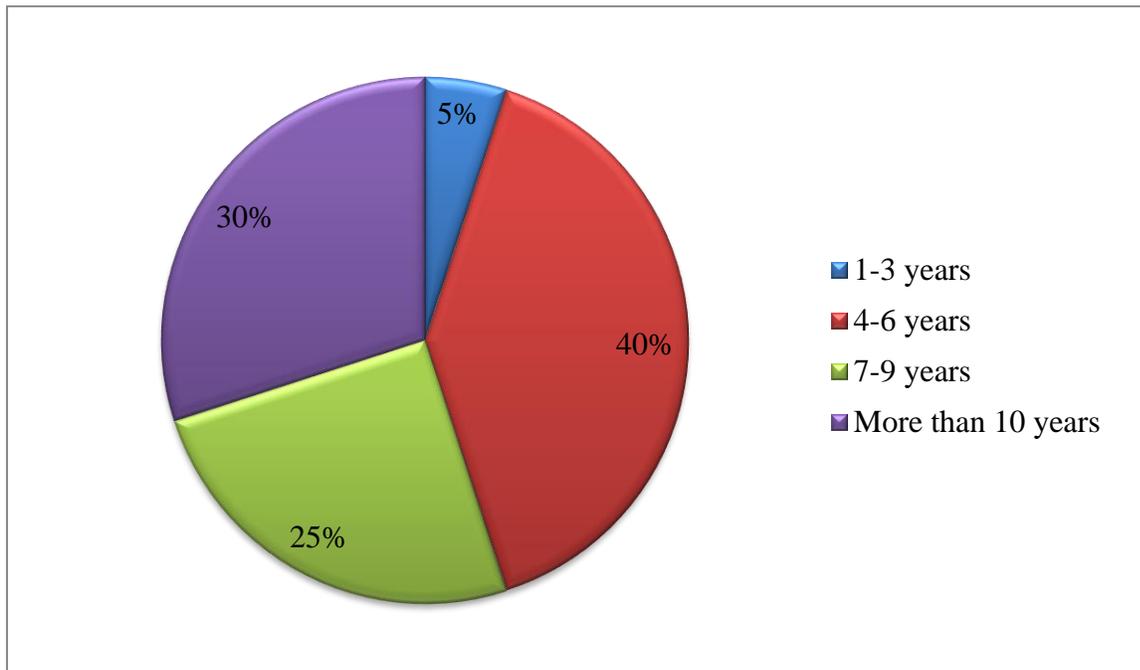
This question revealed varying durations of students studying English as a foreign language as shown in Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2. Out of 40 students surveyed, the majority (40%) reported having studied EFL for four to six years. In continuation, 30% indicated more than 10

years of experience, whereas 25% selected the seven to nine years option. The smallest group (5%) constituted two students who have studied EFL for one to three years. These findings highlight that most respondents have a considerable amount of years studying EFL; in other words, the participants are familiar and experienced with English as a foreign language.

Section Two: Academic Background

The second section of the questionnaire delves into participants' educational history and their writing habits so as to uncover any potential links to writer's block prevalence among EFL Master Two students during their research proposal development.

It includes three main questions, in which the first one offers only two options for response: yes or no, in order to investigate whether students have taken any gap years throughout their studies. This dichotomous question is followed by a structured question as it strives to obtain the specific number of gap years taken in case the answer to the preceding one was yes.

The second question, structured as a Likert scale, examines how frequently these students write in English, offering options from rarely to always in order to determine whether engagement with writing activities contributes to writer's block prevalence or not.

Consistently, the third question explores participants' past experience with research proposal writing by asking a multiple-choice question, with four response options from none to more than five. These questions collectively provide insights into the academic factors that may shape the prevalence of writer's block.

Q3: Have you taken any gap years throughout your academic journey at university?

Table 4.3

Students' Gap Year History

Option	Frequency	Percentage
a) Yes	10	25%
b) No	30	75%
Total	40	100%

Figure 4.3

Students' Gap Year History
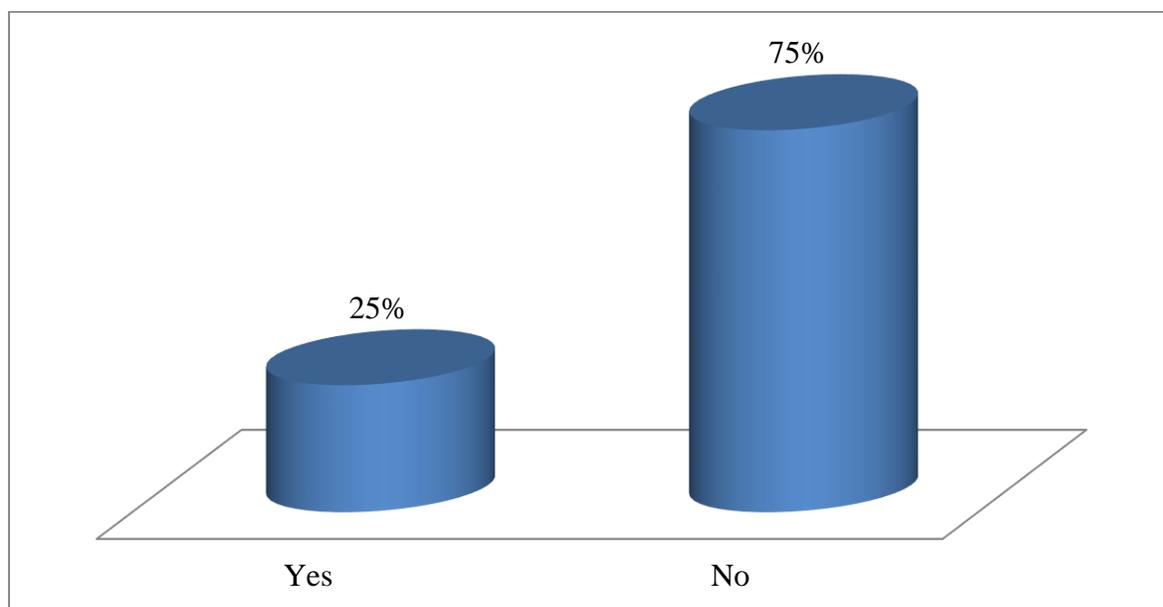
This question item showed that, out of 40 EFL Master Two students at Biskra University, the majority (75%) which constitutes 30 students, reported that they have not taken any gap years throughout their academic journey at university, while the remaining 25%, comprising 10 students, indicated that they have taken gap year(s) throughout their studies (as shown in Table 4.3 and Figure 4.3).

Q4: If yes, please specify below the total number of gap years that you have taken.

In addition to the preceding question, a follow up one were asked for those respondents who had an affirmative answer. Among the 10 students who reported taking gap year(s), the answers were as follow:

➢ One student reported taking one year.

➢ Two students shared taking two years.

➢ One student indicated taking three years.

➢ One student stated taking more than four years.

➢ One student mentioned taking more than five years.

➢ One student claimed taking nine years.

➢ One student expressed taking 10 years.

➢ Two students communicated taking 12 years.

This follow-up question provides deeper specific insights into the amount of gap years taken by those students showing a wide range in the duration of academic break for those who opted for it which complements the initial distribution as shown in Table 4.3 and Figure 4.3.

Q5: How often do you engage in writing activities (e.g., academic writing, journaling, blogging) in English?

Table 4.4

Students' Writing Frequency in English

Option	Frequency	Percentage
a) Rarely	14	35%
b) Sometimes	15	37.5%
c) Often	9	22.5%
d) Always	2	5%
Total	40	100%

Figure 4.4

Students' Writing Frequency in English
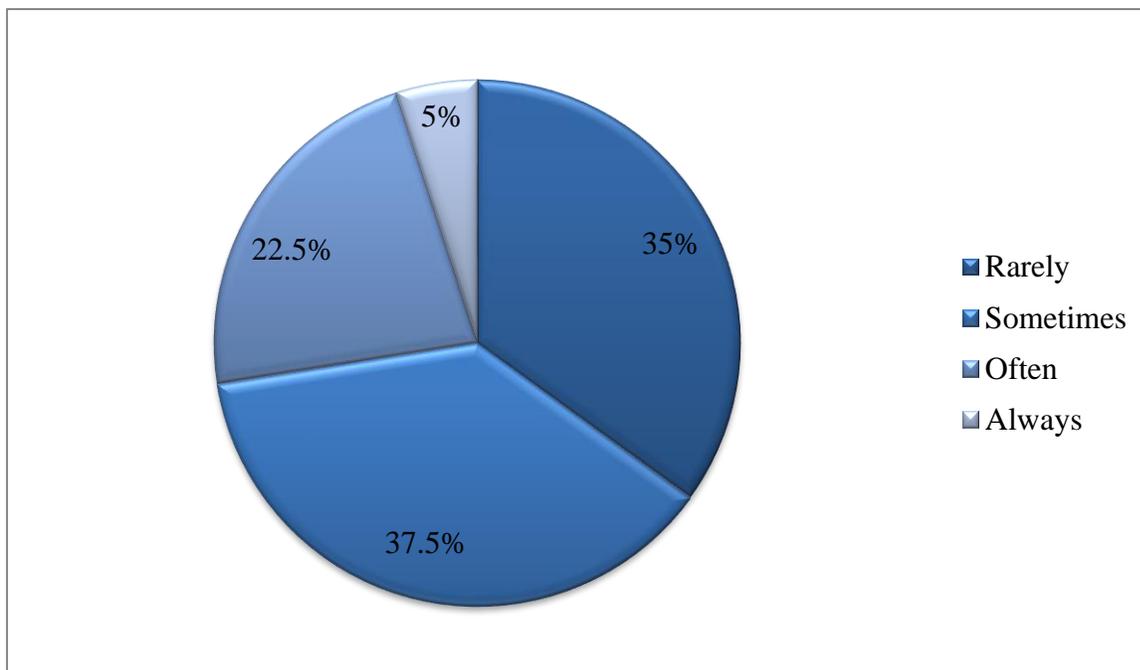
Out of 40 students, who answered the questionnaire, the responses for the frequency of engagement in writing activities in English differed across the four options provided. The largest

proportion, 37.5%, that is 15 students of the sample size indicated that they engage in writing activities in English sometimes. Closely to that 14 students (35%) reported that they engage in such activities rarely. A smaller group of 22.5%, constituting nine students, stated that they write in English often, meanwhile only two students, comprising 5%, indicated that they always write in English.

Q6: How many research proposals have you written before this academic year?

Table 4.5

Students' Research Proposal Past Experience

Option	Frequency	Percentage
a) None	31	77.5%
b) 1-2	7	17.5%
c) 3-5	1	2.5%
d) More than 5	1	2.5%
Total	40	100%

Figure 4.5

Students' Research Proposal Past Experience
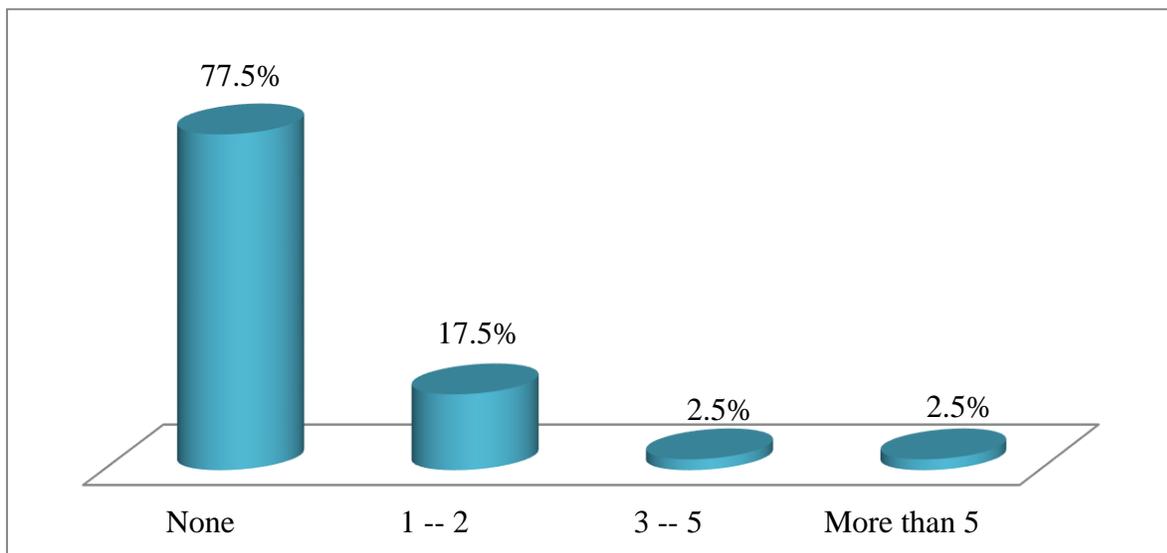
When asked about the number of research proposals written prior to this academic year, the majority of respondents (77.5%), in other words, 31 students out of 40 expressed that they wrote none. 17.5%, encompassing seven students, claimed that they wrote one to two research proposals before this academic year, whereas only one student each selected the remaining options, three to five and more than five, with each accounting for 2.5% of the responses.

Section Three: Writer's Block

The third section endeavors to explore the prevalence of writer's block by not only indicating its occurrence, but also its intensity and persistence among the participants, 40 EFL Master Two students, while developing their research proposals. The section initiates with a straightforward yes or no dichotomous question about the experience of writer's block during this process. For those who answer affirmatively, the following question is a Likert scale seeking to determine the frequency of these experiences, providing four options: rarely, occasionally, frequently, or always.

The final question aims to examine the duration of writer's block episodes by asking a multiple-choice question with four options to choose from: less than one day, one to three days, a week, or more than a week. By addressing these aspects, this section intends to thoroughly understand writer's block prevalence from a rounded angle in the field of academic writing by revealing insights and patterns into its occurrence, intensity, and persistence.

Q7: Have you experienced writer's block while developing your research proposal?

Table 4.6

Students' Writer's Block Experience

Option	Frequency	Percentage
a) Yes	30	75%
b) No	10	25%
Total	40	100%

Figure 4.6

Students' Writer's Block Experience
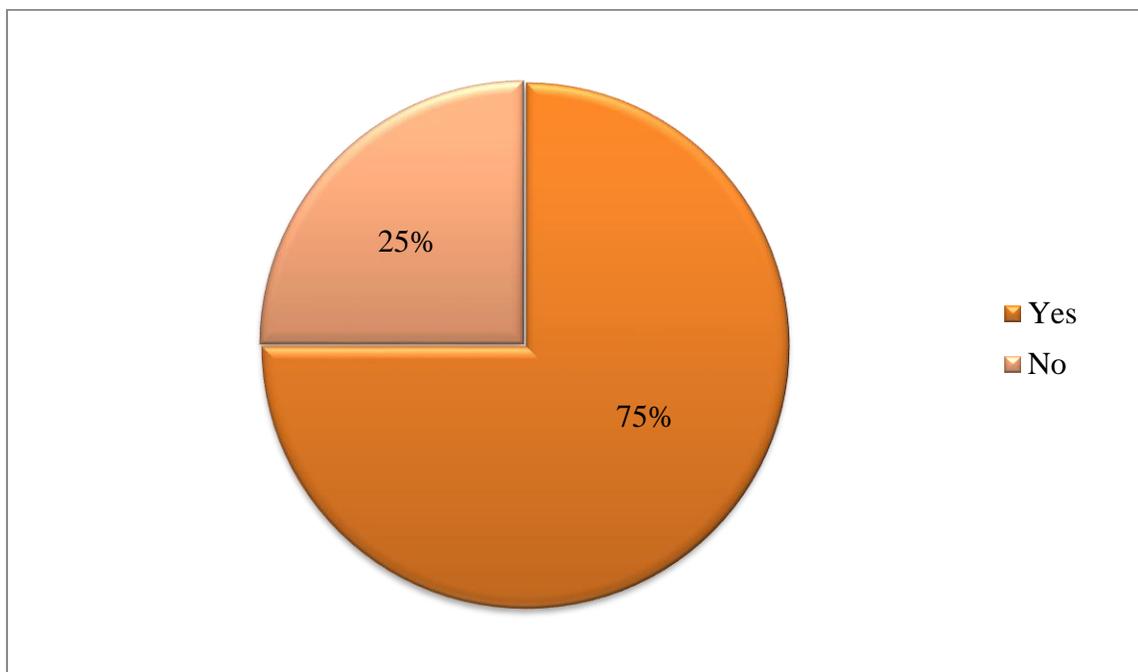
In response for question seven about whether students experienced writer's block while developing their research proposals. The vast majority (75%), comprising 30 students of the sample size (40) answered yes, indicating that they experienced writer's block throughout the process of research proposal development, while the remaining 25%, that is 10 students answered negatively.

Q8: If yes, how often have you experienced writer's block during your research proposal development?

Table 4.7

Students' Writer's Block Frequency

Option	Frequency	Percentage
a) Rarely	6	20%
b) Occasionally	12	40%
c) Frequently	8	26.7%
d) Always	4	13.3%
Total	40	100%

Figure 4.7

Students' Writer's Block Frequency
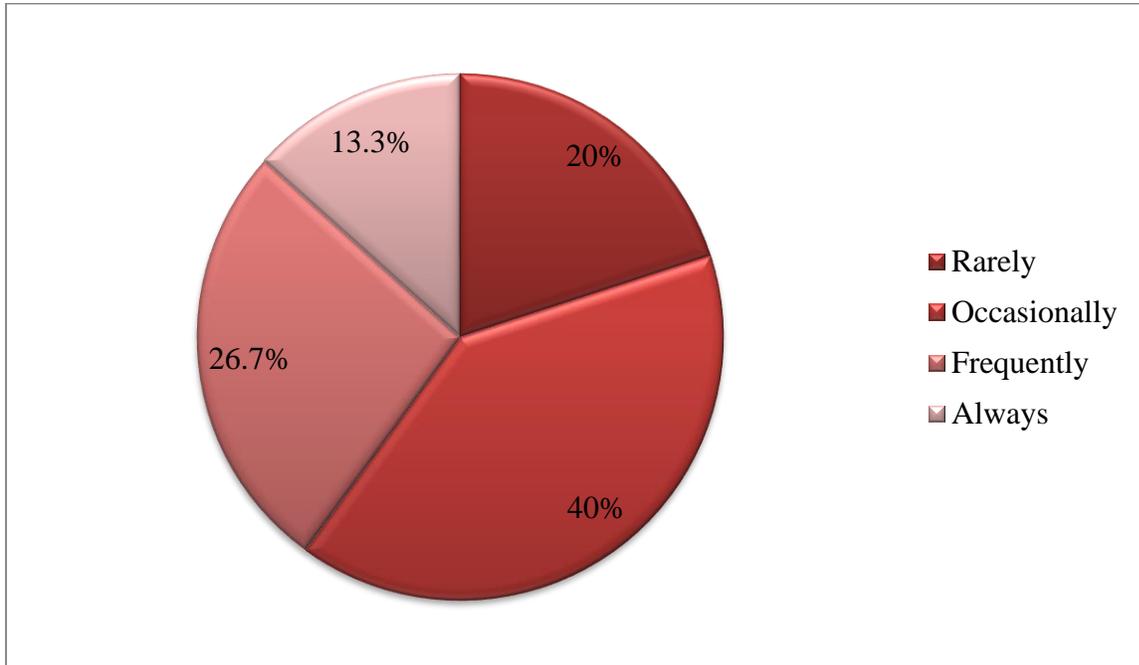
For those who confirmed experiencing writer's block during the development of their research proposals, a follow-up Likert scale question delved into the frequency of experiencing it

by those students. Results, as presented in Table 4.7 and Figure 4.7, indicate that among the 30 participants, 40%, constituting 12 students, noted that they faced this block occasionally. Meanwhile, 26.7%, that is eight students, indicated encountering it frequently, and 20%, composing six students, mentioned it occurred rarely. 13.3%, consisting of four students, shared that they faced writer's block always.

Q9: How long has writer's block typically lasted for you during the development of your research proposal?

Table 4.8

Students' Writer's Block Duration

Option	Frequency	Percentage
a) Less than 1 day	7	23.3%
b) 1-3 days	10	33.3%
c) A week	4	13.3%
d) More than a week	9	30%
Total	40	100%

Figure 4.8

Students' Writer's Block Duration
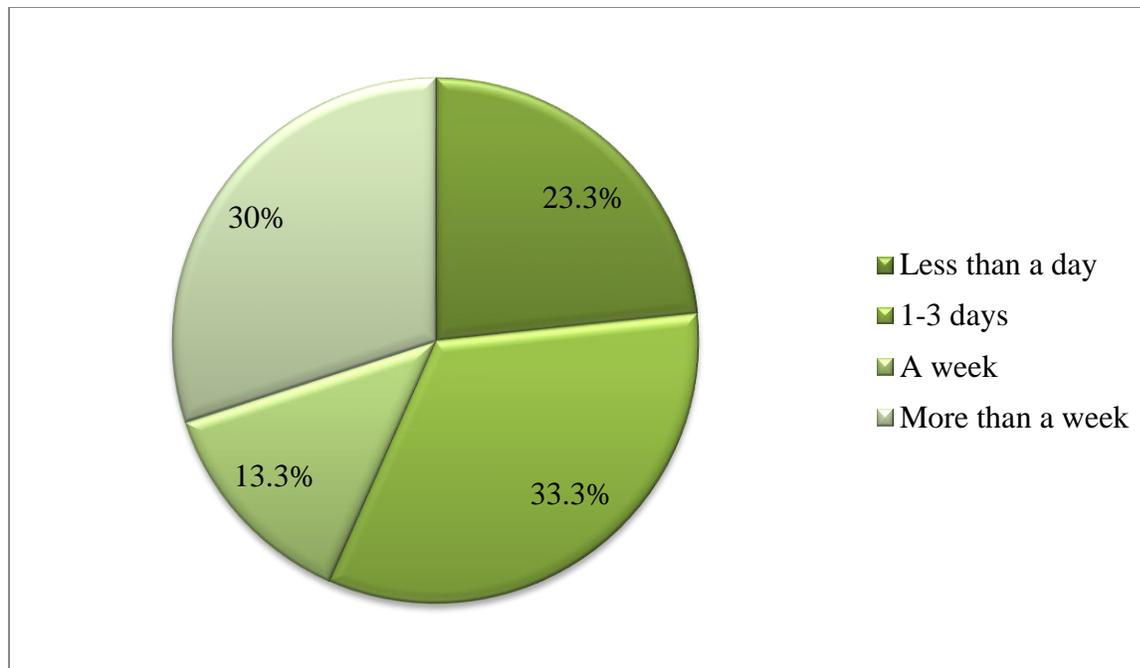
Question nine gathered data upon the duration of writer's block experienced during the development of EFL Master Two students' research proposals. Out of the 30 students who indicated earlier experiencing writer's block throughout the process, 33.3%, which represents 10 students, chose the one to three days option. Moreover, 30%, corresponding nine students reported that their writer's block lasted for more than a week. On the other hand, 23.3%, equivalent to seven students, selected the first option, that is less than one day. Additionally, only four students, making 13.3% of the responses' percentage, stated that it persisted for a week.

4.1.2 Results of the Students' Semi-Structured Interviews

This section is devoted to present the findings collected from the students' semi-structured interviews, which provided valuable insights into the understanding of writer's block by allowing participants to express their own perspective and experience in depth with the

phenomenon. Following a thematic analysis, key themes have emerged shedding light on the main causes and impact of writer's block on the progress and quality of the 40 EFL Master Two students' research proposals.

The five students of the sample size interviewed identified distinct factors contributing to their experience with writer's block during the process of developing their research proposals. These factors are summarized into major themes in the following Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

Causes behind Writer's Block

Causes	Response Sample
Perfectionism and High Standards	"…being a perfectionist, it means that everything should be done perfectly… You can't tolerate any mistakes…or any deviations from what you're planning to do."
	"It's very hard to develop an academic product when you want it to be perfect or at least on a Master's degree level which shouldn't be below average."
	"When you are a perfectionist in a kind of way…so you have high standards and you have expectations that you should meet."
Overthinking and Self-Doubt	"For example, sometimes you have the idea, you have the thought, and you start just saying okay- you have to maybe read more articles…maybe someone mentioned this thought, and you have to cite it and stuff. So you are always suspicious about your ideas."
	"…sometimes I feel like my work is not enough."
Lack of Experience in Academic Writing	"If I had the experience and wrote more proposals in the past, I wouldn't have struggled so much."
Emotional and Psychological Barriers	"I have been like emotionally exhausted so…and I like to write perfectly, so I'm afraid I may fail to write something of good quality which makes me always stressed and anxious."
Environmental and External Factors	"I think the only, maybe, external factor is the lack of resources…but deadlines and workload…I don't know, I don't- I don't really agree."
	"Sometimes there is a kind of noises, especially at home, so I cannot think clearly; therefore, there is no idea to write."

Numerous students expressed hesitation in progressing with their writing due to a strong desire for perfection. One participant shared, "…being a perfectionist, it means that everything should be done perfectly…You can't tolerate any mistakes…or any deviations from what you're planning to do." Another one stated, "It's very hard to develop an academic product when you want it to be perfect or at least on a Master's degree level which shouldn't be below average." This pressure to meet high expectations led further to avoidance and procrastination, contributing to their writer's block.

Some interviewees described their tendency to second-guess their ideas, questioning whether their thoughts were original or structured effectively. One participant elucidated, "For example, sometimes you have the idea, you have the thought, and you start just saying okay- you have to maybe read more articles… maybe someone mentioned this thought, and you have to cite it and stuff. So you are always suspicious about your ideas." Meanwhile another interviewee mentioned, "…sometimes I feel like my work is not enough." This uncertainty prevented them from moving forward in the writing process of the research proposal.

Another common challenge among these students was the unfamiliarity with the research proposal writing. Those who had never written a proposal before expressed difficulty in understanding its structure and requirements, which contributed to uncertainty and delays. One of the participants reflected, "If I had the experience and wrote more proposals in the past, I wouldn't have struggled so much."

Emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and stress were frequently mentioned as significant factors affecting writing productivity in which one of the interviewees noted, "I have been emotionally exhausted so…and I like to write perfectly, so I'm afraid I may fail to write something of good quality which makes me always stressed and anxious."

Some interviewees highlighted external elements, including lack of resources and noisy environments to be as contributing factors to their writer's block. However, deadlines and workload were not widely perceived as major causes. One participant stated, "I think the only, maybe, external factor is the lack of resources…but deadlines and workload…I don't know, I don't- I don't really agree." Another one expressed, "Sometimes there is a kind of noises, especially at home, so I cannot think clearly; therefore, there is no idea to write."

The impact of writer's block on the progress and quality of these students' research proposal development has been recognized and categorized into key themes (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10

Impact of Writer's Block on the Research Proposal's Progress and Quality

Impact	Response Sample
Delayed Progress	"With writer's block, the progress of my research proposal took much time than needed".
	"It definitely made the progress of my work very slow."
Challenges in Meeting Deadlines	"I had to ask my supervisor for extended deadlines because I couldn't finish tasks on time."
	"It affected my time schedule honestly…I have missed a lot of deadlines".
Quality Concerns and Dissatisfaction	"I am fully aware that my research proposal is not of high quality".
	"…it's not as good as I want it to be honestly because I'm out of ideas really."
Loss of Cohesion and Ideas' Clarity	"Sometimes my ideas don't feel cohesive and put together…Sometimes it feels like my way of writing is not academic enough."

For many participants writer's block significantly slowed the writing process of their research proposals, with some requiring extended deadlines or multiple drafts to complete their proposals. One of them stated, "With writer's block, the progress of my research proposal took much time than needed." Another interviewee expressed, "It definitely made the progress of my work very slow."

While some of the interviewees worked with flexible timelines, others acknowledged that their inability to progress efficiently led to difficulties in meeting the set out deadlines. One participant admitted, "I had to ask my supervisor for extended deadlines because I couldn't finish tasks on time." While another reported, "It affected my time schedule honestly…I have missed a lot of deadlines".

Regarding the impact of writer's block on the quality of the research proposal, the semi-structured interviews revealed that the five students had mixed experiences. While some managed to maintain high standards despite delays, others felt that their work did not meet their expectations due to difficulties in organizing ideas and presenting them clearly. One interviewee shared, "I'm fully aware that my research proposal is not of high quality." Meanwhile, another communicated, "It's not as good as I want it to be honestly because I'm out of ideas, really."

Moreover, some interviewees reported struggling with structuring their thoughts cohesively. They noted that their writing lacked clarity and fluidity, which contributed to their dissatisfaction with the final outcome as one of the participants mentioned, "Sometimes my ideas don't feel cohesive or put together…Sometimes it feels like my way of writing is not academic enough."

These findings highlight the common patterns and variations in the five students' experience with writer's block, revealing the underlying causes behind this obstacle; for instance,

perfectionism and high standards, overthinking and self-doubt, lack of experience in research proposal writing, emotional and psychological barriers, as well as environmental and external factors. Additionally, shedding light on its varied impact, including delayed progress, challenges meeting deadlines, quality concerns and dissatisfaction, and loss of cohesion and clarity of ideas.

4.2 Analysis and Interpretation

While the previous section presented the results of both data collection methods, this section focuses on their analysis and interpretation in order to draw conclusions upon writer's block prevalence, causes, and impact on EFL Master Two students' research proposal development.

4.2.1 Analysis and Interpretation of the Students' Self-Report Structured Questionnaire

The results, as reported earlier, indicate that students from the field of sciences of language are more prominent compared to the ones from civilization and literature, which merely constitute 22.5% of the sample size. This distribution suggests that sciences of language's students are more represented in the sample than the ones of civilization and literature which is understandable as the number of students enrolled in the former is considerably higher than the count of students in the latter. This finding can be linked to writer's block, as students from different fields of study may encounter distinct writing demands, expectations, and cognitive challenges, all of which could contribute to the prevalence of this phenomenon. For instance, students from sciences of language often engage in more technical or research-oriented writing, which may increase pressure and heighten the risk of writing anxiety or perfectionism, which are both commonly recognized triggers of writer's block. Conversely, students with a background in civilization and literature may face different stylistic or interpretive challenges that also shape their writing experience and may influence how this difficulty manifests among them.

Under the same section, students' experience with EFL has been explored in which the results varied. However, they highlight that most respondents have a considerable amount of years studying EFL, specifically for four to six years or more than 10 years; in other words, the participants of the sample are familiar and experienced with EFL. This indication could influence their experience with writer's block as less experienced students may struggle significantly with writer's block compared to the ones who have been studying it for over a decade.

Moreover, results from section two reveal that a minor proportion of the sample size, 25%, have taken gap year(s) throughout their studies at university whereas the majority, constituting 75%, had a continuous academic progress. The length of gap years taken among respondents varies significantly ranging from one year to 12 years, which reflects diverse motivations and circumstances behind these academic interruptions. Students who did not take gap year(s) may have a stable academic journey; on the other hand, those with longer gaps may struggle when it comes to writing, which may potentially increase the likelihood of them experiencing writer's block. This variation sheds light on how academic history can influence students' writing experiences.

Regarding students' writing frequency, the findings reported considerably differ which suggests inconsistent writing pattern for many respondents, with a significant number of students rarely writing except for two cases who reported conversely. This irregular writing habit may contribute to the prevalence of writer's block. Concerning students' past experience with research proposal development, the majority (77.5%), which are 31 students out of the sample size (40) did not write any before, indicating a lack of exposure to its structure and content. This information implies that research proposal development for most students may be a new challenge, which could cause them writer's block while developing it for the first time.

More importantly, out of the 40 students chosen for this study, a considerable majority of 30 respondents experienced writer's block while developing their research proposals. This 75% proportion indicates that writer's block is a prevalent phenomenon among the participants, which are 40 EFL Master Two students at Biskra University. As for its frequency, results demonstrate that although not all students deal with writer's block consistently, a prominent number suffers from it regularly, which shows how intense this problem can be; subsequently, affecting the flow and productivity of research proposal development. In terms of how long students experience writer's block, the data reveal a mixture of some experiencing it as a temporary setback for one to three days, while others face it more persistently for an extended period of time, which is more than a week. This duration can notably hinder their academic progress. All of these indicators show how significant, intense, and persistent writer's block is among these students, which makes it a critical problem that needs to be addressed and highlighted in order to help those learners cope with it.

4.2.2 Analysis and Interpretation of the Students' Semi-Structured Interviews

The findings from the semi-structured interviews reveal key themes surrounding the main causes and impact of writer's block on the progress and quality of the 40 EFL Master Two students' research proposal development. These interviews highlighted perfectionism as a primary contributor to writer's block as several participants expressed hesitation in starting or progressing with their writing due to the fear of producing work that did not meet their high standards. This aligns with prior studies, such as Boice's (1985), which suggest that perfectionism can hinder writing fluency by increasing self-doubt and excessive editing during the drafting process.

Another major factor was self-doubt and overthinking, which led participants to question the originality and validity of their ideas. Similar findings were reported by Nurkamto et al. (2024), who highlighted self-doubt as one of the main causes for writer's block as it diminishes learners' motivation to write effectively. Academic writing's requirement for extensive referencing and validation of arguments exacerbated this issue, as participants felt the need to extensively research before committing to writing. Furthermore, the lack of experience in writing research proposals contributed to their uncertainty and procrastination. First-time writers struggled with structuring key sections, leading to confusion about what to include. These findings echo in academic writing literature that emphasizes the importance of prior exposure to formal research writing in mitigating writer's block, including Zorba (2023) and Diab et al. (2023) studies.

Moreover, emotional and psychological elements played a role in the manifestation of writer's block throughout this critical stage, with emotional exhaustion, stress, and anxiety influencing the participants' ability to focus and generate ideas. All of which has been confirmed in past studies; for instance, Baştuğ et al. (2017) phenomenological study, which cites anxiety as a contributing factor to learner's writer's block.

Regarding its impact, participants consistently reported delays in their research proposal development as a result of writer's block. Many struggled with meeting deadlines, either requiring extensions or rushing their work under pressure. This highlights that writer's block has a negative impact on academic productivity, as extended writing blocks disrupt the research process and create additional stress. This indication aligns with Rose (2009) work, which mentioned missing deadlines and reduced productivity as one of the impacts of writer's block on learners' academic performance.

The effect of writer's block on the quality was different across participants. While some were able to maintain their standards despite delays, others expressed dissatisfaction with their work, citing lack of cohesion and clarity in their writing. This negative impact was also noted by Zorba (2023), who discussed how writer's block can affect learners' ability to develop effective writing compositions, leading to poor quality works. The findings of this present study suggest that writer's block does not always diminish the overall quality of academic output but often affects the writer's perception of their work. Not to mention, participants who lacked exposure to research proposal writing experienced greater uncertainty regarding the academic structure of their work, further contributing to dissatisfaction. This underscores the importance of proper academic training in reducing writer's block among these students.

4.3 Synthesis of the Findings

The results from both the students' self-report structured questionnaire and the students' semi-structured interviews provide a well-rounded understanding of writer's block among the 40 EFL Master Two students developing their research proposals.

While the questionnaire establishes its prevalence and patterns, the interviews add depth by exploring its underlying causes and impact. The structured questionnaire revealed that writer's block is a widespread issue during the research proposal development stage among the 40 EFL Master Two students at Biskra University. Furthermore, the results obtained concerning its recurrence and duration showed how intense and persistent this challenge is rather than an occasional difficulty. The semi-structured interviews reinforced this finding as participants consistently described prolonged periods of hesitation, delays, and lack of progress due to writer's block.

Additionally, a general lack of experience in structuring and developing such academic work has been identified via the questionnaire's results, which was further confirmed in the interviews, where several participants expressed uncertainty about research proposal writing, citing unfamiliarity with its format and requirements as a major cause of their writer's block. Many interviewees believed that prior experience would have helped them navigate the writing process more efficiently. When it comes to students' writing habits, findings revealed inconsistency in doing so. The semi-structured interviews added further clarity to this trend, indicating that perfectionism, self-doubt, emotional exhaustion, and anxiety were common psychological barriers that prevented students from maintaining a consistent writing pace. Participants described how their high standards, fear of criticism, and pressure to produce flawless work led to hesitation and avoidance, further exacerbating their writer's block.

While the questionnaire primarily focused on the prevalence of writer's block, the interviews revealed additional external factors that affected students' writing process. Some interviewees identified lack of resources as an external challenge, while others mentioned environmental distractions; for instance, noise at home, as obstacles to clear thinking. Nevertheless, deadlines and workload were not widely considered significant contributors, suggesting that the psychological and cognitive aspects of writer's block were more impactful than purely external pressures.

Equally important, the questionnaire results established that writer's block is an intensive problem as it lasts for prolonged periods of time, which explains why participants in the interviews stated the struggles of writing multiple drafts. Beyond that, while some students maintained high-quality work despite delays, others expressed dissatisfaction with their writing, citing loss of cohesion and unclear ideas as negative effects of their writer's block. All of which

confirms that writer's block is a pervasive and persistent issue among the 40 EFL Master Two students developing their research proposals at Biskra University.

The structured questionnaire provided statistical evidence of the phenomenon's prevalence, frequency, and duration whereas the semi-structured interviews added depth to it by revealing the psychological, emotional, and cognitive struggles associated with it, impacting negatively the progress and quality of these students' research proposals. These findings highlight the need for structured academic support, such as writing workshops or mentoring sessions in order to help these EFL learners overcome this challenge and improve their research proposal development.

Conclusion

This chapter summarized the collected data from both the structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews providing a comprehensive understanding of writer's block. Through the analysis and interpretation of these data, patterns and trends of writer's block prevalence, its main causes, and impact have been identified drawing conclusion around the raised research questions at the beginning of this study. These results collectively highlight that writer's block is a complex phenomenon shaped by internal struggles such as perfectionism, self-doubt, and emotional exhaustion, as well as external challenges like lack of experience, lack of resources, and environmental distractions. These findings not only reinforce existing research but also underscore the need for academic support structures that assist students in overcoming these barriers and improving their writing process so as to succeed in developing effective research proposals.

General Conclusion

Writing a research proposal can be a demanding endeavor for learners in general, and for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in particular, as they may face additional linguistic and cognitive challenges while developing it. One of these difficulties that may interrupt the writing process of a sound research proposal among those learners is writer's block, which is a psychological barrier that hinders students' ability to initiate or sustain writing. This challenge may arise from a variety of factors and can significantly affect the development of the research proposal.

This present study explored the prevalence, causes, and impact of writer's block among EFL Master Two students at Biskra University during the development of their research proposals. Using two data collection methods, which are a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, the researcher gathered both quantitative and qualitative data to answer the study's research questions. The questionnaire was distributed online to 40 EFL Master Two students who were developing their research proposals during this academic year, in order to measure the prevalence of this phenomenon. Meanwhile, its primary causes and their impact on the progress and quality of the research proposal were identified through five semi-structured interviews with a subset of students chosen from the questionnaire's respondents who have reported experiencing writer's block during the development of their research proposals.

Through descriptive statistics and thematic analysis, the findings revealed that writer's block is a widespread phenomenon among the 40 participants of this study. It is often attributed to perfectionism, self-doubt, overthinking, and lack of experience in research proposal writing, as well as psychological predicaments and environmental distractions. This significant block negatively affected both the progress and quality of these students' research proposals as it led to

delays in the progress and difficulties in adhering to deadlines. All of which affected the students' productivity and, in some cases, the cohesion and clarity of their writing eventually leading to dissatisfaction with the final output of their work.

Pedagogical Recommendations and Implications

The widespread of this phenomenon necessitates the implementation of some pedagogical interventions so as to help these EFL learners overcome this obstacle in writing. Taking into consideration how prevalent this problem is among the 40 EFL Master Two students at Biskra University, awareness campaigns about writer's block causes, impact, and coping strategies are a crucial first step in helping those EFL learners understand the challenge that they are dealing with and learn how to address it early in the process of their writing, ultimately improving their confidence and productivity.

Since psychological and emotional barriers are key contributing factors to the manifestation of this problem among these learners. Universities should create multidisciplinary writing centers, which include not only academic writing tutors but also psychologists or counselors, which are specialized in managing those psychological manifestations. Moreover, institutions can train teachers to apply mindfulness exercises, reflective writing, and stress-reduction techniques in their classes so that learners learn how to manage these psychological barriers which contribute to writer's block.

Given that the lack of experience in writing research proposals is another factor leading to writer's block. Universities or institutions should often organize workshops presented by experts in academic writing in order to help guide these EFL learners by offering writing templates and step-by-step guide about the appropriate structure of a sound research proposal. This can help

learners navigate the complexity of the task at hand before they engage in the writing process of it.

From another angle, for learners who suffer from environmental distractions, universities should offer access to research databases, writing centers, and quiet study spaces where they cannot be interrupted. Such places would help foster their attention, productivity, and creativity leading to less rates of writer's block's manifestations.

Promoting reading, practicing writing, and adopting time management techniques are some recommendations for managing and overcoming this block. Frequent reading would help learners to get inspired, expand their vocabulary, and learn diverse writing patterns. All of which could help in avoiding writer's block. Furthermore, free-writing can help these learners organize their thoughts, clarify ideas, and unlock new perspectives as writing regularly develop a habit of creativity, which makes it easier for them to generate content over time. Using Pomodoro sessions or goal-setting strategies are such time management techniques that students can adopt in order to maintain steady progress in writing and thus avoid getting overwhelmed or blocked throughout the process.

Limitations of the Study

While it is acknowledged that no research can be considered flawless, certain constraints emerge as a result of the chosen methodological approach and the decisions made by the researcher. These constraints, often referred to as the limitations of the study, are factors beyond the researcher's control, yet they hold significant influence over the outcomes and interpretations of the research. Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge these limitations in order to provide a

comprehensive understanding of the scope and the findings of the study as they shape the overall validity and applicability of the results.

One of the primary limitations of this study is the fact that it focuses solely on EFL Master Two students at Biskra University, which may not represent the experiences of students in other contexts or institutions. Another limitation stems from the reliance on self-reported data through the use of students' structured questionnaires and students' semi-structured interviews. While these methods allow for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences; they are also subject to biases; for instance, recall bias, social desirability bias, or participants' tendency to downplay or exaggerate their experiences. These biases could impact the accuracy of the data and limit the reliability of the findings. Additionally, the semi-structured nature of the interviews may lead to variability in responses due to differences in participants' communication styles, which may introduce subjectivity into the data interpretation.

Given the limited timeframe for the study as well, it may limit the extent of data collection and analysis. The semi-structured interviews were conducted within a set period of time, and while this allows for a focused investigation, it did not fully capture the long-term effects or complexities of writer's block on the research proposal development. Additionally, due to time constraints, the number of participants, who were included in the study, was limited since Master Two students were busy working on their dissertations; thus, only a minority was available to sit for the interviews. This limitation may reduce the diversity of perspectives and experiences gathered in the data.

Suggestions for Further Research

Taking into account the fact that writer's block is a serious common phenomenon among EFL learners, future research could explore various aspects which would help in the understanding and overall the overcoming of this challenge.

An unexplored potential could be the investigation of the effectiveness of specific pedagogical interventions; for instance, writing workshops, cognitive-behavioral techniques, and mentorship programs, in reducing writer's block among these EFL learners. Moreover, researchers could examine the role of technology-assisted writing tools, namely AI-driven writing aids and digital brainstorming platforms, in relieving cognitive overload and enhancing students' productivity. Additionally, future research could explore gender-based differences and whether it plays a role in the frequency and severity of writer's block manifestation among students since such studies could provide valuable insights into tailored interventions which address gender-specific challenges in writing. Another potential direction could be the exploration of the long-term effects of writer's block on learners' academic success, specifically its impact on dissertation completion rates, research quality, and students' confidence in academic writing.

By addressing these gaps, research could inform valuable insights into the understanding of this complex phenomenon. Therefore, it would help in empowering these EFL learners with the necessary tools in order to navigate academic writing challenges with confidence and clarity.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: The Students' Self-Report Questionnaire

Students' Self-Report Questionnaire

Dear Master's two students,

You are kindly invited to participate in this questionnaire, which will serve as a data collection method for the present research study on writer's block and research proposal development. Writer's block is a condition where writers face difficulties starting or finishing a piece of writing.

Your insights and collaboration are highly appreciated and will significantly contribute to the progress and completion of this Master's dissertation.

Rest assured that all information provided will be kept confidential and will not be shared with any third parties, as it will be used solely for academic purposes to meet the research's aims.

There is no right or wrong answer, so please feel free to respond as honestly as possible. If you encounter any question-item that you find offensive or uncomfortable, you may skip it.

For any inquiries or further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher via the following email address: abderrahmane.bebrouza@gmail.com

The researcher

Section One: Personal Information

1. **Field of Study:** (Please tick one answer)
   - Sciences of Language ☐
   - Civilization and Literature ☐

2. How many years have you been studying English as a foreign language (EFL)?

   (Please select the option that best describes your situation)

   - 1-3 years ☐

   - 4-6 years ☐

   - 7-9 years ☐

   - More than 10 years ☐

Section Two: Academic Background

1. Have you taken any gap years throughout your academic journey at university?

   (A gap year is when a student takes a break from their studies for work, travel or other

   experiences)

   Yes ☐   No ☐

   - If yes, please specify below the total number of gap years that you have taken.

   …………………………………………………..

2. How often do you engage in writing activities (e.g., academic writing, journaling,

   blogging) in English?

   (Please choose the option that best describes your experience)

   - Rarely ☐

   - Sometimes ☐

   - Often ☐

   - Always ☐

3. How many research proposals have you written before this academic year?

   (Please select one answer)

- None ☐

- 1-2 ☐

- 3-5 ☐

- More than 5 ☐

Section Three: Writer's Block

1. Have you experienced writer's block while developing your research proposal?

   (Please tick one answer)

   Yes ☐   No ☐

2. If yes, how often have you experienced writer's block during your research proposal development?

   (Please choose the option that best describes your experience)

- Rarely ☐

- Occasionally ☐

- Frequently ☐

- Always ☐

3. How long has writer's block typically lasted for you during the development of your research proposal?

   (Please choose the option that best describes your experience)

- Less than 1 day ☐

- 1-3 days ☐

- A week ☐

- More than a week ☐

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Appendix 2: The Opinionnaire for the Questionnaire

The Opinionnaire

1. In your opinion, does the questionnaire comprehensively address the key areas of the study, mainly the prevalence and frequency of writer's block among EFL Master's two students?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

- If no, are there any significant aspects that you feel might be missing or need further elaboration?

   …………………………………………………………………………………………

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2. Do you find the structure and titles of the questionnaire's sections to be clear, logical and effective for gathering the necessary information?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

- If no, are there any suggestions for improvement?

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3. Do you find the structure of the question-items logical and well-organized?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

- If no, are there any suggestions for improvement?

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4. Are there any repetitive questions?

Yes ☐   No ☐

- If yes, please specify them.

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5. Are there any irrelevant questions that need to be removed?

Yes ☐   No ☐

- If yes, please provide the number of the question(s) below, and would you please explain

the reasons?

………

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6. Did you find any grammar / spelling mistakes in the questions?

Yes ☐   No ☐

- If yes, please notify them below.

………

………

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7. Do you find the length of the questions to be appropriate?

Yes ☐   No ☐

-   If no, would you recommend any adjustments?

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8. Are there any ambiguous questions that need to be reformulated and / or

clarified?

Yes ☐   No ☐

-   If yes, please indicate which questions require rewording, and would you mind

explaining why?

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9. Are there any misleading questions?

Yes ☐   No ☐

10. If yes, please notify them below and explain why do you think so?

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11. What do you think of the layout?

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12. Is the questionnaire of reasonable length?

Yes ☐   No ☐

- If no, what do you suggest for improvements?

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13. How much time do you think should be allocated for the participants to answer the

questionnaire?

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14. 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.

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Thank you very much for your time and collaboration

Appendix 3: The Questionnaire Validation Form

Questionnaire Validation Form

I hereby certify that I have reviewed the questionnaire prepared by Mr. Mohamed Abderrahmane BEBROUZA, who is currently undertaking his 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. I consent to participate in the validation process, as my feedback will be used solely to improve the research instrument and will remain confidential.

Background Information on the Expert:

Name: …………………………………………………………………….

University: …………………………………………………….................

Present Occupation: …………………………………………………...

Degree: …………………………………………………………………..

Telephone Number: …………………………………………………...

Email Address: …………………………………………………………..

Signed: …………………………………………………………………..

Researcher Contact Details:

Mohamed Abderrahmane BEBROUZA

Email: abderrahmane.bebrouza@gmail.com

Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra

Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages

Department of English Language and Literature

Appendix 4: The Opinionnaire for the Piloting Stage of the Questionnaire

The Opinionnaire

1. Did you find the structure and titles of the questionnaire's sections to be clear, easy to follow, and understand?

    Yes ☐   No ☐

-   If no, are there any suggestions for improvement?

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2. Were the instructions provided in the questionnaire clear?

    Yes ☐   No ☐

-   If no, are there any suggestions for improvement?

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3. Was it easy for you to understand and respond to the questions?

    Yes ☐   No ☐

-   If no, please indicate what aspects were difficult, and would you mind explaining why?

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4. Were the questions neutral and unbiased, allowing for an honest response?

    Yes ☐   No ☐

- If no, please indicate which questions were not, and would you mind explaining why?

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5. Were there any technical terms or jargon in the questionnaire that were unclear to you?

Yes ☐   No ☐

- If yes, please specify which terms and would you mind suggesting some alternatives.

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6. Did you encounter any technical issues while completing the questionnaire (e.g.,

    problems with accessing the questionnaire, submitting answers)?

Yes ☐   No ☐

- If yes, please specify the issue.

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7. Did you experience any issues with the flow or sequencing of the questions?

Yes ☐   No ☐

- If yes, please specify the issue.

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8. Are there any ambiguous questions that need to be reformulated and/or clarified?

Yes ☐   No ☐

-   If yes, please indicate which questions require rewording, and would you mind explaining

why?

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9. Did you find the length of the questions to be appropriate?

Yes ☐   No ☐

-   If no, would you recommend any adjustments?

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10. Did you find the amount of time it took you to complete the questionnaire to be

reasonable?

Yes ☐   No ☐

-   If no, what do you suggest for improvements?

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11. Did you find the questionnaire interesting and engaging?

Yes ☐   No ☐

- If no, what do you suggest for improvements?

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12. Was the language used in the questionnaire clear and appropriate for your level of

understanding?

Yes ☐   No ☐

- If no, what do you suggest for improvements?

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13. Did you feel that the questionnaire layout was visually appealing and well organized?

Yes ☐   No ☐

- If no, what do you suggest for improvements?

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14. Did any of the questions make you feel uncomfortable or hesitant to respond?

Yes ☐   No ☐

- If yes, please specify which questions and why?

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…………………………………………………………………………………………………

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15. Were there any sections of the questionnaire that felt redundant or unnecessary?

Yes ☐   No ☐

- If yes, please specify which sections and why?

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16. Were there any questions that you felt were too personal or invasive?

Yes ☐   No ☐

- If yes, please specify which ones and why?

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17. Were the response options provided for each question adequate and comprehensive?

Yes ☐   No ☐

- If no, please specify which questions and suggest additional response options.

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18. Do you have any additional comments or feedback about the questionnaire?

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Thank you very much for your time and collaboration

Appendix 5: The Interviewees Informed Consent

Informed Consent

Dear Interviewee,

You are kindly invited to participate in a research study conducted by Mr. Mohamed Abderrahmane BEBROUZA as part of the completion of his MA dissertation at Biskra University. Your participation is highly appreciated and will contribute significantly to the completion of this research.

The present study aims to investigate the prevalence, causes and impact of writer's block on the development of the research proposal. In this regard, the researcher will hold a total of five (5) interviews in order to collect data aligning with this study's purposes.

If an agreement is reached, you will be asked to take part in an online or face-to-face interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded to ensure accurate data collection.

Rest assured that all information collected during the interview will be kept strictly confidential. Data will be anonymized, and no personally identifiable information will be shared in the final report. Only the researcher and the dissertation supervisor will have access to the raw data.

Moreover, the participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. You may also choose not to answer any specific questions during the interview.

There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. The potential benefits include contributing to the understanding of writer's block and helping to improve the quality and the progress of the research proposal development.

If you agree on participating in this study, please sign the attached consent form. Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

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

Yours sincerely,

Researcher Contact Details:

Mohamed Abderrahmane BEBROUZA

Email: abderrahmane.bebrouza@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 Mr. Mohamed A. BEBROUZA.

Name:……………………………………………………………………….

E-mail:………………………………………………………………………

University:………………………………………………………………..

Faculty:…………………………………………………………………...

Department:…………………………………………………………….....

Date:…………..................

Signature:

Appendix 6: The Interview Validation Form

Interview Validation Form

I hereby certify that I have reviewed the interview questions prepared by Mr. Mohamed Abderrahmane BEBROUZA, who is currently undertaking his 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 interview questions. I consent to participate in the validation process, as my feedback will be used solely to improve the research instrument and will remain confidential.

Background Information on the Expert:

Name: ………………………………………………………………….

University: ……………………………………………………...............

Present Occupation: ………………………………………………………...

Degree: …………………………………………………………………..

Telephone Number: ………………………………………………………...

Email Address: …………………………………………………………..

Signed: …………………………………………………………………..

Researcher Contact Details:

Mohamed Abderrahmane BEBROUZA

Email: abderrahmane.bebrouza@gmail.com

Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra

Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages

Department of English Language and Literature

Appendix 7: The Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Students' Interview

1. How long have you been writing in English as a foreign language?

2. What are the types of writing do you usually engage in?

3. Do you face any difficulties with specific types of writing?

4. Have you finished writing your research proposal?

5. Have you experienced writer's block while developing your research proposal?

6. What do you think were the main causes behind your writer's block?

7. Based on your experience with writer's block, what is the impact that it had on the progress and quality of your research proposal?

8. Looking back, do you have any advice or suggestions for other EFL Master's two students who might be facing similar challenges?

9. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with writer's block and research proposal development?

Appendix 8: The Opinionnaire for the Interview

The Opinionnaire

1. In your opinion, do the interview questions comprehensively address the key areas of the study, mainly the causes and impact of writer's block on EFL Master's two students?

    Yes ☐   No ☐

-   If no, are there any significant aspects that you feel might be missing or need further elaboration?

    ……………………………………………………………………………………………

    ……………………………………………………………………………………………

2. Do you find the structure of the interview questions logical and well-organized?

    Yes ☐   No ☐

-   If no, are there any suggestions for improvement?

    ……………………………………………………………………………………………

    ……………………………………………………………………………………………

    Are there any repetitive questions?

    Yes ☐   No ☐

-   If yes, please specify them.

    ……………………………………………………………………………………………

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3. Are there any irrelevant questions that need to be removed?

    Yes ☐   No ☐

- If yes, please provide the number of the question(s) below, and would you please explain

  the reasons?

  ……………………………………………………………………………………………

  ……………………………………………………………………………………………

4. Did you find any grammar / spelling mistakes in the questions?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

- If yes, please notify them below.

  ……………………………………………………………………………………………

  ……………………………………………………………………………………………

5. Do you find the length of the questions to be appropriate?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

- If no, would you recommend any adjustments?

  ……………………………………………………………………………………………

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6. Are there any ambiguous questions that need to be reformulated and / or

   clarified?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

- If yes, please indicate which questions require rewording, and would you mind

  explaining why?

  ……………………………………………………………………………………………

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7. Are there any misleading questions?

Yes ☐   No ☐

- If yes, please notify them below and explain why do you think so?

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8. What do you think of the layout?

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……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Is this data collection method overall lengthy?

Yes ☐   No ☐

- If yes, what do you suggest for improvements?

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……………………………………………………………………………………………………

9. How much time do you think should be allocated for the interviewees to answer the

interview questions?

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10. If there are any questions that you believe are of close relevance to the purpose of the

interview but were not included, please write them below.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you very much for your time and collaboration

Appendix 9: Student 5 Interview Transcript

The Researcher: Good evening! This is Mohamed Abderrahmane BEBROUZA, and this is interview number five with interviewee five. Emm before we start off, I would like to express my sincere gratitude as you agreed to sit for this interview which falls under the study investigating writer's block and research proposal development.

Student 5: Glad to be part of this interview.

The Researcher: So just to break the ice, we'll begin with some introductory questions and movingly we will get into more technical ones.

Student 5: Okay.

The Researcher: So, my very first question is: how long have you been writing in English as a foreign language?

Student 5: I have been writing in English for about 8 years since high school to be more precise.

The Researcher: That's a considerable amount of years. Would you mind sharing with us what are the types of writing do you usually engage in?

Student 5: I usually engage in narrative, creative and descriptive writing. It feels less restrictive.

The Researcher: I see! So, you're more into creative writing rather than academic writing?

Student 5: Exactly.

The Researcher: Do you face any difficulties with either types of writing?

Student 5: Yes, sometimes I find it hard to organize my thoughts and pour them into the paper like sometimes my writing sounds like an interior monologue or something.

The Researcher: Would you please elaborate more on why do you find it hard to do so?

Student 5: Yes, sure. Euh I have many ideas in my mind, but when I try to write them down, they come out in a messy or confusing way. Not all of my writing but some of them sound like I'm thinking out loud.

The Researcher: So, is it about the structure that you feel that you are lacking when writing down your ideas?

Student 5: It's not about structure, but sometimes I feel like the ideas are being more abstract than concrete when I write them down as if the ideas are emm let's say they are not clear enough for the audience to understand, okay? It's probably because of the use of words or probably because my thoughts are not organized and this typically works or happens more when I am writing like really you know sitting and just writing my thoughts down, being narrative or descriptive or creative writing, and unlike academic writing it's something I'd say different. When it comes to academic writing yeah I do struggle with academic writing with appropriate, I mean choice of words, you know academic words and stuff but when it comes to understanding the overall meaning of an idea, my academic writing tend to be clearer than my free writing I'd say. I tend to move from too general to too specific and narrow down my ideas and stuff but when it comes to creative, descriptive or narrative writing I struggle a little bit with you know just putting ideas in an organized way.

The Researcher: Well, thank you so much for clearing this up. Now I do understand your point of view even better. Now let's address the elephant in the room: have you finished writing your research proposal?

Student 5: Yes, I have.

The Researcher: That's a huge achievement, congratulations!

Student 5: Thank you so much!!

The Researcher: Have you experienced writer's block while developing it?

Student 5: Emm the writer's block it's something that I have been experiencing since I started working on my dissertation so it's literally the only struggle… well, not the only, but the main the main issue that I've been going through, and actually too when it comes to the research proposal as it is the very first thing that we have started to work on. Yes, I have experienced this.

The Researcher: It is a very relatable struggle honestly.

Student 5: Yeah, and even when I talk to my supervisor about it since he always asks me what are the challenges that I'm going through and every time I tell him that I'm going through this writer's block, he says that like "the White Sheet Syndrome," you know? He says that it's totally normal. If you don't go through this, it means that you're not being a good researcher.

The Researcher: That's such an interesting point of view. Euh do you remember at what stage of the research proposal development did you most commonly experienced this phenomenon?

Student 5: I experienced the writer's block at the very beginning of writing my research proposal like the introduction you know because the planning was easy and everything was easy revising and everything but writing down these… let's say ideas and thoughts, and you know writing down the outline that you have already prepared, it was hard… it was so hard and it's like I had to do it non-stop like if I start writing my research proposal, I have to just finish it right there emm I mean if I just go and take a moment elsewhere and go back, I will just experience the writer's block again, but you know what it's always the first... the first step emm the first you know words to type in and then it's easy.

The Researcher: For real, the very first step is always the hardest, but once done everything runs smoothly.

Student 5: Yeah.

The Researcher: What do you think were the main causes behind your writer's block?

Student 5: Okay… I was expecting this question… I was waiting actually to answer it… emm okay- let me try to link the writer's blocked to me as a person. I experienced the writer's block because I am a perfectionist, and I think that it aligns so much with this issue like being a perfectionist, it means that everything should be done perfectly, like… you don't- you can't tolerate any mistakes, and, you know, any deviations from what you're planning to do. Another reason or let's say cause, it can be the academic writing and its nature. For example, sometimes you have the idea, you have the thought, and you start just saying okay- you have to maybe read more articles… maybe someone mentioned this thought, and you have to cite it and stuff. So you are always suspicious about your ideas, like… okay- don't start writing just go and read more articles probably it's mentioned elsewhere.

The Researcher: That's a very interesting angle. Do you think that it's overthinking, though?

Student 5: Emm yeah… it can be overthinking at a certain points, yeah.

The Researcher: Do you think external factors such as environment, strict deadlines, workload, or lack of resources contributed to it as well? Or is it more linked to internal factors like you have said perfectionism, overthinking and self-doubt?

Student 5: I think that it is more linked to internal factors.

The Researcher: So you're saying that external factors don't contribute to it as much?

Student 5: I think the only, maybe, external factor is the lack of resources, you know? That can be- that can lead to writer's block. But deadlines and workload… I don't know, I don't- I don't really agree.

The Researcher: Well, thank you for being brutally honest about it. Now, based on your experience with writer's block, what is the impact, that you think, it had on the progress and quality of your research proposal?

Student 5: With writer's block, the progress of my research proposal took much time than needed. However, it didn't actually affect the quality of my writing… emm I want to say my research proposal but it's more likely took much time then a research proposal needs, you know?

The Researcher: Totally. So, would you say it influenced your timeline and ability to meet deadlines?

Student 5: No, actually, I don't work with deadlines with my supervisor because we agreed on this point, as I don't work under pressure.

The Researcher: I see. So, were you satisfied overall with the final quality of your research proposal despite facing writers block?

Student 5: Nope, I wasn't fully satisfied.

The Researcher: And that was because of the reoccurrence of writer's block throughout the process of developing it, right?

Student 5: Yes, the uncertainty.

The Researcher: What do you mean exactly?

Student 5: Writer's block comes along with being uncertain about what you're going to write, which is closely linked to being a perfectionist sometimes, you know? You keep asking yourself whether this is suitable and meets your expectations or no.

The Researcher: Oh, this is very true because I, for one, do relate to that.

Student 5: Phew… I'm not the only one.

The Researcher: Yeah, welcome to the club. (Chuckles)

Student 5: Yeah. (Chuckles)

The Researcher: Well, we're almost done. We only have two remaining questions.

Student 5: Okay.

The Researcher: Looking back, do you have any advice or suggestions for other EFL Master's two students who might be facing similar challenges?

Student 5: Emm… the first piece of advice I'd give to present and future Master's students is that you need to start writing… you need to type something on that blank page. I know it's hard, but you need to just get out of that comfort zone of being a perfectionist, and this is I mean, in my case, I just had to jump out of my comfort zone, and I was like okay- just write anything down and then you can go back, and edit it, and revise what you've written. My second advice is that once you start writing, do not stop, like… because if you just take a moment to rest and go back, you will have that writer's block again… just try to gather all your strength, sit down and write everything… just write everything, and once you finish, you can go back and revise and edit okay- like… editing and revising everything is easy, but writing the whole thing is the hardest part. Also, I noticed that every time I write something and then maybe go grab a drink or do something- I mean, in just 5 minutes, and I go back to my laptop I... okay, again, writer's block, and I have to just get to manage it again.

The Researcher: That's such a thoughtful advice of you. Thank you so much for sharing this with us.

Student 5: You're welcome!

The Researcher: Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with writer's block and research proposal development?

Student 5: Emm… okay- I would like to share just one point which is that being a researcher doesn't mean that you have to be perfect at a certain point, you know? And taking this, the first step, which is the research proposal. It is typically the hardest for everyone to go through, so if you don't feel uncertain… if you don't feel like you are writing nonsense… if you don't get the writer's block, it just means that you're not a real researcher.

The Researcher: I couldn't agree more. It's all part of the process and if anything it means you're doing things with heart and not wasting time actually.

Student 5: Exactly.

The Researcher: Well, that's a wrap. Thank you so much again for agreeing to participate in our study. Your insight and contribution are highly appreciated.

Student 5: You're most welcome! I hope I helped you with my yapping.

The Researcher: Absolutely, your input has been very helpful.

Student 5: I'm glad.

ملخص الدراسة

تعتبر متلازمة عائق الكتابة مشكلا شائعا بين الكتاب بصفة عامة و الباحثين خاصة خلال مرحلة كتابة خطة البحث. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى البحث عن مدى شيوع و أسباب و تأثير متلازمة الصفحة الفارغة على تقدم و جودة خطة البحث الخاصة بطلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية المسجلين في السنة ثانية ماستر في جامعة بسكرة. عن طريق إتباع نهج البحث ذو الطرق المختلطة استنادا على نموذج البراغماتية، تبنت هذه الدراسة تصميم بحث دراسة حالة بالطرق المختلطة المدمجة. من أجل جمع البيانات الضرورية، استعمل الباحث وسيلتين: استبيان منظم مع 40 طالب(ة) لغة إنجليزية من الفئة المستهدفة لهاته الدراسة من أجل الحصول على نتائج كمية حول مدى شيوع هذه المشكلة و مقابلات شبة منظمة مع خمسة طلبة تم اختيارهم من بين الذين أكملوا الإجابة عن الاستبيان الإلكتروني مشيرين على تجربتهم لمتلازمة عُقدة الكتابة خلال عملية كتابة خطة البحث الخاصة بمشروع تخرجهم. الهدف من هذه المقابلات هو تحديد الأسباب الشائعة لهذه المشكلة و آثارها على تقدم و جودة خطة البحث. عن طريق تطبيق الإحصاء الوصفي بحساب التكرار و النسب المئوية للنتائج الكمية مع التحليل الموضوعي للمقابلات. تم التوصل إلى أن 75% من الطلبة يعانون من هذه المعضلة لأسباب مختلفة منها السعي وراء الكمالية، التفكير المفرط، المتطلبات الخاصة بالكتابة الأكاديمية و غيرها. كما أوضحت النتائج التأثير السلبي لهذه المتلازمة على تقدم خطة بحث الطلبة بحيث أنها تؤدي إلى تأخيرات عديدة مما يخلق جوا مشحونا بالتوتر و هذا ما يؤثر على جودة العمل فيما يخص الترابط و الوضوح في الكتابة. كل هذا يفسر عدم اكتفاء الطلبة بالنتيجة النهائية لعملهم. تعتبر هذه الدراسة خطوة أساسية نحو فهم هذه الإشكالية التي يعاني منها طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية عند كتابة الأعمال الأكاديمية بحيث يمكن استخدام هذه النتائج في تطوير إستراتيجيات تهدف إلى الحد من متلازمة التوقف عن الكتابة مما يساعد هؤلاء التلاميذ على كتابة خطة بحث ناجحة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكتابة الأكاديمية، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، إعداد خطة البحث، عُقدة الكتابة