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## **MASTER THESIS**

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**An Investigation into the Perceived Academic Writing Difficulties  
that Face the Algerian PhD Students Studying in the United  
Kingdom  
A Case Study of the Algerian PhD Student at the United Kingdom  
Universities**

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## **Dedication**

*This dissertation is dedicated:*

*To the beloved people who have meant and continue to mean so  
much to me:*

*My dear parents who helped me in every way possible,*

*My Brothers Moustapha and Okba,*

*My friends, who shared their words of advice and encouragement  
to finish this study.*

*To the love of my life*

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## **Abstract**

The present study investigated the academic writing difficulties facing the Algerian PhD students during their doctoral thesis in the United Kingdom (UK), for this purpose, the questionnaires were designed to gain as much as possible information about students' profiles and difficulties. Correspondingly, the required data for the study were collected via online survey (Google Forms). Thus, to get reliable and consistent data the researcher adopted the mixed-method approach. This study surveyed 49 Algerian PhD students in the UK completing their doctorate thesis in English. As criteria of the participation in the current study, the students must have been educated in Algeria and they must be currently studying in one of British universities. Although most of the students were taught academic writing in a university core module at least in their MA degree, the findings of this study showed that they still face various challenges in academic writing. The obtained data revealed that the difficulties that face the Algerian PhD candidates in the UK are represented mainly in academic language, coherence and cohesion and critical writing. In addition to that, the participants expressed that they were not prepared enough for the academic writing in the doctoral degree. On the basis of these results, the hypotheses we put forward at the outset of the study were not confirmed and several suggestions and recommendations have been proposed to overcome these difficulties.

**Key words: Academic writing, Academic writing difficulties.**

## **List of abbreviations**

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**L2:** Second Language

**ESL:** English as a Second Language

**UK:** United Kingdom

**PhD:** Doctor of Philosophy

**TESOL:** Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages

**ESP:** English for Specific Purposes

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## **General Introduction**

## **1. Genral Introduction**

The United Kingdom (UK) has become one of the top destinations to study around the world. With traditions of excellence dating, back hundreds of years, high class institutions at every corner and much more flexibility than many other countries. During the past 5 years, a remarkable number of Algerian students started their academic studies at English-speaking Universities. These universities have an impressive international reputation, with students in the United Kingdom encouraged to develop their potential while enjoying a full social life.

Algerian students at English-speaking universities have a number of challenges

To overcome in their academic study, one of these challenges can be English language, especially at the beginning of their academic studies in one of the English-speaking universities, and particularly in the level of writing skills. The difficulties faced by Algerian students are different depending on their branches, whether they are scientific or literary, and on the level of their studies, whether they are declared and undeclared students, and on the subject areas they study for especially at the graduate level.

Although many studies have looked at the difficulties faced by the Algerian students in their academic writing, very few have addressed the difficulties faced by Algerian PhD students abroad. Therefore, the current study attempts to explore the perceptions of EFL Algerian PhD students towards their academic writing difficulties in British academic context. This study followed a mixed method approach employing a questionnaire that will be administered to 49 Algerian Doctoral candidates in the UK, more details about the study will be presented in the following chapter of the research.

## **1. Statement of the Problem**

Around the world, a massive number of students are travelling to study in English speaking universities. and The United kingdom universities are known to be one of the biggest receivers for international students, International students can come from cultural and educational backgrounds that produce learning behaviors and expectations that differ widely from those they assume for British students. most of International students unfortunately face a number of writing difficulties in their academic career in the UK. Algerian PhD students in the UK also suffer from these writing difficulties in their academic career, which can limit their productivity in their scientific dissertations and papers of study as researchers. As an example of these writing difficulties, we can mention both: the lack of productive writing in academic context and the lack of academic terminologies

Moreover, the cause of these difficulties is the previous writing learning experiences that the international student bring with them to English speaking universities (Maria and Anastisia, 1999). Additionally, Algerian graduate students are supervised by faculty who may not have strong mentoring skills in writing; these students often struggle to produce the effective and needed academic language that they must use in their graduate research. Therefore, the purpose of this study aimed to investigate the perceived academic writing difficulties and the strategies used to overcome the writing difficulties faced by Algerian PhD students studying in the UK

## **2. Research Questions**

Our research aims to answer these questions:

- 1) What are the academic writing difficulties that Algerian Phd students face the most in their academic career in the UK?
- 2) To what extent do Algerian PhD students in the UK think that Algerian postgraduate experience prepared them for academic writing on a doctoral level in the UK?

### **3. Research Hypotheses**

The current study seeks to confirm the following hypotheses:

- The academic writing difficulties that Algerian PhD students face the most during their academic career in the UK are paraphrasing, quoting, and summarizing, plus to the lack of academic terminologies.
- The Algerian PhD candidates in the UK think that they were not prepared enough for the academic writing on the doctoral degree.

### **4. Research Aims**

This study aims to contribute to the improvement of the Algerian PhD students' poor academic writing production in English. It generally aims to investigate the perceived academic writing difficulties faced by Algerian PhD students studying in the UK. More specifically, it will study the writing previous learning experiences that the Algerian PhD student brought with them to the UK. In addition to that, it aims to study the effects of the previous writing learning experiences on the Algerian Phd students writing skills. Finally, it aims to study the differences between the Algerian academic writing context and the British academic writing context.

### **5. Significance of the Study**

The present research highlights the perceived academic writing difficulties by Algerian PhD students studying in the UK, by defining some of the most shared difficulties by Algerian PhD students, which allows the faculties that will supervise the future PhD students to work on these difficulties and produce competence and productive future PhD researchers that will not struggle in their academic career. As well as to attract the attention of the future PhD candidates to the difficulties that they may face in the future as PhD students in English speaking universities, to collaborate with their current supervisors to overcome their

academic writing difficulties. This research also aimed to study the effect of the previous writing learning experiences affect on the student's productivity in their dissertations to provide students with the needed strategies that the previous PhD Algerian students used to overcome their writing difficulties. Finally, this research can assist future similar research to replicate the study by involving more independent variables and respondents to generate a more dynamic and meaningful output.

## **6. Research Methodology**

**6.1 Research Approach:** Our research will be held using mixed-method approach. We intend to gather information and to explore and describe the current situation in hand by using quantitative analyses using data that we aim to investigate the perceived academic writing difficulties by Algerian PhD students studying in the UK.

**6.2 Research Design:** The design is descriptive with the aim of highlighting the perceived academic writing difficulties that affect the participants, which is presented in the shape of investigation in which there is an association between the writing difficulties and the previous writing learning experience of the participants.

Therefore, the study seeks to report the data collected from the participants that will be analyzed to reach a final conclusion.

**6.3 Data Collection Method:** the data collection method for this study is based on a questionnaire that was designed in which it was used to gather data about the participants in which we obtained the needed information concerning their writing difficulties, experiences, and the strategies used to overcome their writing difficulties in the UK.

**6.4 Population of the Study:** the Algerian PhD students of English branches at The UK Universities. We investigated the perceived academic writing difficulties by 49 Algerian PhD students studying in the UK.

## **7. Delimitation of the Study**

Our main focus is to highlight the kind of difficulties faced by Algerian PhD students in their academic career at the UK's universities which means defining the writing difficulties and report the reason behind them from different participants and to share the strategies used by the students to overcome their writing difficulties to be more productive academically.

## **8. Structure of Dissertation**

Our study is divided into two main parts: a theoretical part, which includes two chapters and an empirical part, which includes one chapter. On the one hand, chapter one provides an in-depth discussion of writing difficulties. It provides the reader with terminologies definitions related to academic writing and academic writing terminologies, additionally, this chapter highlighted both the challenges of learning academic writing and it mentioned the reasons behind making academic writing difficulties. On the other hand, chapter two provides literature review about academic writing difficulties, we will introduce a number of international studies about academic writing difficulties and its concerns, methods and findings. This chapter is going to be divided into three parts, Studies on academic writing difficulties in global EFL contexts, in Arab EFL contexts and with EFL learners in English speaking contexts. In chapter three, the research methodology and data analysis are presented. Moreover, it contains the data collection procedures, as well as the analysis of the students' questionnaire, all the collected data are analysed and interpreted to comeup with findings and recommendations by the end of the chapter.



# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION TO ACADEMIC WRITING**

## **Introduction**

In this chapter, we will be introducing and discussing academic writing and its processes, and the main perceived academic writing difficulties. First, we will be providing a historical background through defining academic writing and reviewing its history. In this part, we will see the principal historical stages that academic writing went through to take its shape as it is today. Afterwards, we will tackle the challenges of learning academic writing skills in English as a foreign language classes. The main objective of this chapter is going to be about introducing the perceived academic writing difficulties and the types of academic writing difficulties. Furthermore, we will present the reasons behind facing these difficulties by PhD students and what does it take from an English language learner to produce good academic writings. By the end of this chapter, we will have a basic understanding about academic writing difficulties. In addition to that we will be shifting to the second chapter where the case of Algerian PhD students in the UK will be introduced.

### **1.1. Introduction to Academic Writing**

One of the teachers' main concerns while working with novice researchers is to enable them to produce a good academic writings. It is agreed that academic writing is difficult even for native students because it requires many processes and steps to master more than the other kinds of writings as academic writing has special characteristics in terms of grammatical features and lexical items.

To a large extent, academic writing has many of the things that a personal writing does not obtain, it has its own set of rules and practices. These rules and practices are organised around a formal order and structure in order to present ideas, and its objective is to inform rather than entertain. It has a formal tone and style, but it is not complex and does not require the use of long sentences and complicated vocabulary. Therefore, the researcher is obliged to

respect the academic writing rules and practices. Hence, academic writing is important to be learned by researchers in order to define their academic production and their specific areas of expertise. So, what is academic writing and why it is considered difficult to be mastered?

### **1.1.1 Definition of Academic Writing**

A simple dictionary<sup>\*</sup> definition for academic writing would say that it is an essay, thesis, report, journal article or any other written document which has the purpose of educating the reader or achieving some scholarly aim for the writer. However, many scholars have made huge effort to present a better understanding for the term of academic writing, and it would be worth mentioning that linguists made great efforts toward studying academic writing as an essential and important subject.

May Sinh (1986) defined academic writing as an instruction, and it is connected to the study of specific academic subject matter. It is viewed as a means of promoting understanding of this content as well. In this book she tried to clarify that academic writing is a list of rules and practices that organizes the scientific process of producing an academic work for the researcher. Another definition was introduced by Hyland (2002) where he said that "academic writing is like all the forms of communication, is an act of identity: it not only conveys disciplinary 'content' but also carries a representation of the writer. He meant that academic writing does not just revolve around (as a) conveying an ideational 'content', but it is also about the representation of self-awareness. Furthermore, Whitaker claims that Academic writing is essentially the writing you have to do for your university courses, when she said that "Instructors may have different names for academic writing assignments, but all of these assignments have the same goal and principles" (Whitaker, 2009). This means that academic writing is related to all the writings you do in order to deal with an academic topic such as (essay, paper, research papers, term paper, argumentative paper/essay, analysis paper/essay, informative essay, position paper).

From an academic point of view, Hartley defined academic writing saying " Academic writing refers to a style of expression that researchers use to define the intellectual boundaries of their disciplines and their specific areas of expertise " (Hartley, 2008). This means that it is a way of writing in which the researcher used to present his scientific production.

Finally, we can say that academic writing is a process that has its own rules and practices that is different from the other kinds of writings. These sets of regulations organize the academic work for researchers to produce a respectful scientific work.

## **1.2.The Importance of Academic Writing**

The reason behind learning about academic writing is the same as all kinds of writing, which is to communicate, but the communication we are highlighting here is more academic, formal, and scientific. A clearly written assignment lets the thought shine while giving a precise understanding of the branch that the researcher is a part of, along with the scientific message that he intends to deliver. In this part of the first chapter we are going to discuss briefly some of the importance use of academic writing.

### **1.2.1Analytical and Critical Thinking**

Analytical and critical thinking can be developed by academic writing. As a researcher you have to take the information and communicate it in a way that makes sense to the reader, which means that academic writing requires you to examine ideas, evaluate them against what you already know and make decisions about their worth. Marcia Said that "Students learn analytical/critical thinking skills when they confront actual academic/professional tasks in which skills are modelled, explained and practised" (Marcia,2010). When the researcher has the ability to analyse anything, he is learning and developing a skill that stays with him forever.

### **1.2.2. Professionalism**

Professionalism can also be learned within the process of writing academic assignments.

MacDonald said that "To focus on knowledge-making texts and identifiable sub-disciplinary communities leads logically to focus on professional academic writing." (MacDonald, 1994). Professionalism give and show researcher a systems for capable and successful composition and utilization of English by gaining a vocabulary choices skills and the use of disciplinary language. The researcher will also be able to maintain a professional and serious tone. Writing in a familiar or friendly style should be avoided while writing an academic piece of writing; along with jokes, personal anecdotes, and colloquial expressions are not appropriate.

### **1.2.3. Clarification and Organization**

The clarification and organization of scientific ideas can never be done without academic writing, the act of writing often clarifies your thoughts and writing in your own words is an act of creation, however; when it comes to academic writing the research can rely on both creativity and citation or building statements on other scholars' scientific work. Originality in psychology, it is normally thought of it as designing new empirical studies or devising new theories. However whenever the researcher describes something in his own words, he is displaying small-scale originality and critical evaluation. Even if you are describing someone else's work, you are interpreting it and selecting combinations of words which most closely convey its meaning to you.

### **1.3. Categories of Academic Writing**

Academic writing is an instrument through which we express our academic and scientific thoughts and achieve our intellectual needs. As an academic activity, academic writing can be grouped into seven basic types or categories: essay, research paper, research article, dissertation, thesis, technical report, and research project. After that we will go through the challenges of learning academic writing skills.

### **1.3.1. Essay**

An essay is a document that has a defined structure – an introduction, a body and a conclusion, it explores a topic based on evidence in research, then reaches a conclusion. The aim of the essay is to make connections between texts and ideas, engage in critical thinking, and go beyond simply describing or summarising a topic to generate an interesting analysis. An essay needs to contain a central argument, which is the researcher' answer to the topic question, and demonstrate reasons based on evidence for your conclusion.

### **1.3.2. Research Paper**

Research paper is a substantial piece of academic writing, usually done as a requirement for a class, in which the author does independent research into a topic and writes a description of the findings of that research. Rosemary said that "a research paper is a form of written communication. Like other kinds of nonfiction writing-letters, memos, reports, essays, articles,.books-it should present information and ideas clearly and effectively" (Rosemary. 2009). The purpose of research papers require writers to locate information about a topic that is, to conduct research, take a stand on that topic, and provide support or evidence for that position in an organized report.

### **1.3.3. Research Article**

A research article reports the results of original research, assesses its contribution to the body of knowledge in a given area, and is published in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal. According to Tacoma Community College, research article is a detailed account of research activity written by the scientists who did the research--not by someone else who is reporting on the research; it is a primary resource, which means that a research article is a primary source that reports the methods and results of an original study performed by the authors.

#### **1.3.4. Dissertation**

Dissertation is a long essay on a particular subject, especially one written for a university degree or diploma, more precisely, a dissertation as a form of assessment differs from other module assessments. The expectation is that the researcher take responsibility for your own learning and that you produce a literature review, you choose a method for undertaking a study, write up your findings and discuss the outcomes in a discussion section. The university of Nottingham reports that the importance of dissertation by saying "A dissertation provides a student with an opportunity to develop intellectual independence and to specialise in depth in a topic of interest ". Dissertation is simply a document submitted in support of candidature for an academic degree or professional qualification

#### **1.3.5. Thesis**

A thesis is an idea or theory that is expressed as a statement and is discussed in a logical way. More specifically, a thesis is a requirement for higher-level degree programs and is a preliminary requirement for attaining a degree and graduate in honors. Internationally, a thesis is usually referred to a doctoral degree or Phd, also known as a dissertation. A clear definition shared by the University of Cambridge said " A thesis is a long piece of writing on a particular subject, especially one that is done for a higher college or university degree and its the main idea, opinion, or theory of a person, group, piece of writing, or speech", which means that it is a long essay or dissertation involving personal research, written by a candidate for a university degree.

#### **1.3.6. Technical Report**

A technical report is a document written by a researcher detailing the results of a project and submitted to the sponsor of that project, technical reports may be published before the corresponding journal literature and the content may be more detailed than the corresponding

journal literature, although there may be less background information since the sponsor already knows it. Benjamin said, "the intent of a technical report is to communicate an idea/problem to a reader effectively" (Benjamin, 2001). In addition, technical reports are usually not peer reviewed unless the report is separately published as journal literature classified and export controlled reports have restricted access.

#### **1.3.6. Research Project**

A research project is a scientific investigation, usually using scientific methods, to achieve defined objectives. Another definition of research is given by Creswell, who states that "Research is a process of steps used to collect and analyze information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue"(Creswell,2008). It consists of three steps: pose a question, collect data to answer the question, and present an answer to the question. Which means that it is a process in which the researcher Describes idea for an investigation on a certain topic.

#### **1.4. Challenges of Learning Academic Writing Skills**

There are many academic writing challenges facing both international students studying at an English speaking universities and students from English-speaking countries. Most of the students find it difficult to jump from the casual day-to-day style to the very high standard expected of students in post-secondary institutions. It is not only linguistic, but a cultural shift, therefore expectations are quite different.

One of the challenges faced by students is that academic writing is different from the non-academic discourse. The non-academic language is the one that students used to learn English in high school or through the interaction with the culture. So, students tend to employ some of the elements of non-academic writing discourse when they write academic assignments. Therefore, Students receive negative feedback from their supervisors. Neeley reports that students find it difficult to adapt to academic literacy conventions which involve ways of thinking, reading, speaking and writing that are dominant in the academic setting (Neeley,



2005). Which means that students in university are taught about academic writing but they found it quite difficult when it comes to employ it in their assignment because academic writing is not only related to writing but it is a way of thinking and speaking.

Referencing can also be one of the biggest challenges that face students in the process of writing an academic assignment. Both in-text citation and listing references are found to be quite challenging. With in-text citation, students are still using their High school experiences when they mention many sources without acknowledging authors. Thus, There will be a massive use of quotes without any use of the student language. Furthermore, Students may not be able to cite or quote correctly from books, the internet, newspapers and journal articles (Atta Obeng & Lamptey, 2013). In addition to that, writing a reference list of the cited sources could be difficult for students. Bowker says that "Failure to reference in students' written work at university results in plagiarism which is a very serious form of academic dishonesty" (Bowker, 2007).

## **1.5. Introduction for the Perceived Academic Writing Difficulties**

After taking a glance about academic writing, its importance, and categories and challenges. In the next part of this chapter we will see the perceived academic writing difficulties. So, what are the academic writing difficulties?

### **1.5.1 Overview of Academic Writing Difficulties**

The fact that the academic writing difficulties is an important topic for linguists, many scholars tried to define this issue, and they have demonstrated various views regarding the reasons behind these difficulties.

Academic writing could be a difficult skill to be learnt or taught due to the fact that it is not a simple cognitive activity; rather it is believed to be a complex mental production which requires "careful thought, discipline and concentration" (Grami, 2010, p. 9). Unlike the other kinds of writing Grami believes that academic writing requires more careful thought,

discipline and concentration because it is known to be a complex mental production.

Alsamadani defined the academic writing difficulties as a result of the complexity that the students find in the process itself when he says "...this difficulty and complexity arise from the fact that writing includes discovering a thesis, developing support for it, organizing, revising, and finally editing it to ensure an effective, error-free piece of writing" Alsamadani (2010 p. 53). Writing is considered a difficult skill to teach because it includes several components, for example, a comprehensive command of grammar, grasp on spellings and punctuation, use of appropriate vocabulary, suitable style to meet the expected readers' expectations and organizational skills (Musa, 2010).

### **1.5.2. The Types of Academic Writing Difficulties**

Academic writing difficulties is any sort of problem that faces the student when it comes to the process of producing an academic piece of writing. In the following points we are going to mention some of the main academic writing difficulties that face university students.

#### **1.5.2.1. Language, Coherence, and Cohesion**

The aim of academic writers is to producing a piece of writing where the vocabulary is carefully chosen, the sentences are logically related, the ideas are clearly expressed, and the paragraphs are coherent. Students are also aware that both coherence and cohesion are quite important in academic writing, but they find it quite difficult to be achieved . Wenyu and Yang says that "indicate that students who follow a clear outline and plan find it easy to organize their ideas and relate them to each other"(Wenyu, Yang. 2008). In a study made in Oman, The graduate certificate students stated that they tend to make an outline before they begin writing their research, but unfortunately they still face that issue. As one of the respondents stated, the reason of this difficulty could be ascribed to the fact that they do not have enough knowledge about cohesive devices, the academic words, and the structure and the organization of the academic writing (Al Badi, 2015). Students of higher education often

say that they have never dealt with such with such a long academic assignments, and they believe that they do not have the needed abilities.

EFL writing is still one of the most challenging areas for teachers and students. L2 student and their teachers of English at Faculties of Education have to pass many academic courses in English, Yet they will face some issues related to coherence and cohesion. Abdel Hamid says in his paper "these students still experience some problems in the cohesion and coherence of their English essay writing" (Abdel Hamid.2010). Students' writing in an EFL classroom context should show their awareness of their own communicative goals, of the reader, and of the writing context by taking into consideration coherence and cohesion.

#### **1.5.2.2. Significant Topics and Relevant References**

The ability to develop a good research topic is an important skill. An instructor may assign you a specific topic, but most often instructors require the research to select your own topic of interest, Alon says in his paper that " Scientists are expected to be smart enough to figure it out on their own and through the observation of their teachers" (Alon, 2009). Therefore, the student should Be aware that selecting a good topic may not be easy. It must be narrow and focused enough to be interesting, yet broad enough to find adequate information.

The topic that the novice research pick should be deeply interested, and it should be related to the chain of thinking because the stray problem can mislead the whole research project as well as the research is not obliged to come up with a new topic,"The problem selected should not necessarily be a new one. It may be old problem or one on which work has already been done" (Shoket, 2014). in addition to that, the topic should be within meaningful limits i.e. it should not be too comprehensive.

When the novice researcher develop his own ideas and arguments and use other scholars work to support or contrast his views, it is really important that the research identify clearly

which ideas are made by him and which ideas or work belong to another scholar or source. The researcher should always acknowledge any ideas and work that were not originally his own by providing a reference to the source of that information. Doing that is essential to avoid plagiarism.

### **1.5.2.3. References**

References are quite important in any type of research, referencing can prove that the researcher made a great effort reading and building background knowledge about a certain topic. Mātauraka says in his paper "Referencing is important because it helps show that you have been thorough and careful in your academic work" (Mātauraka, 2017). He also mentioned that "it indicates what material is your original work since you have provided a citation for work that is not your own"(Mātauraka, 2017). Which means that when the researcher put a reference in his research the reader will be informed whether this information is related to the research or another scholar or source.

### **1.5.2.4. Expressing the Research Voice (Critical Writing)**

Finding the research own individual voice among other writers' voices is problematic for some students. Some researchers find it quite difficult to make a balance between their own views and what they read is something hard to do. Yasuda in her case study of Japanese postgraduate students in Monash University reported, "The participants sometimes do not have sufficient background information about the issue they are writing about. Another reason might be the lack of confidence" (Yasuda, 2004). Which means that the students may believe that they are not experts as those scholars who are both experienced and intelligent. Therefore, the novice researcher may feel uncomfortable presenting his personal ideas or point of view toward the research he is dealing with. About this difficulty Becker comments and advised the novice researchers saying "never underestimate their aptitudes for skillfully expressing their own views" (Becker, 1986, cited in Murry & Moore, 2006).

## **1.6. The Reason Behind Facing these Academic Writing Difficulties**

Being a good academic writer has never been an easy task. In order to come out with a well-developed academic output. The learner need to avoid committing academic writing mistakes and to come over the academic writing difficulties. Therefore, we will try to address some of the most common academic writing difficulties that both the learner and the teacher need to know in order to come out with the proper academic writing.

### **1.6.1 Lack of Academic Vocabularies**

Academic vocabulary is one of the most difficult skills for students to acquire. Nagy and Townsend offer a definition for academic language, calling it “the specialized language, both oral and written, of academic settings that facilitates communication and thinking about disciplinary content” (Nagy & Townsend, 2012). To use the academic language the student or researcher needs to be able to use the scientific terms easily. The deficiency in vocabulary is equal to both native speakers and L2 students. The academic language is the language that allows the students to learn and think like scientists, historians and mathematicians. And the lack of this academic vocabulary is identified as one of the main obstacles to student success. The academic language includes general academic words that are carried across the disciplines as well as the discipline specific terminology that is found in only one specific class such as the terms used in Applied linguistics or other specific specialties, Neither of these can be separated. Both are essential and must be taught to the same degree.

### **1.6.2. Teachers Effects on the Students’ Academic Writing Difficulties**

One of the reasons could be lack of training for teachers, some teachers may not have the needed capacities or degree to teach academic writing which will definitely affect the students negatively and produce a number of graduate with a low academic writing level. Sajid and Siddiqui reported in their paper that "teachers teaching English language either have no relevant degrees in the field of applied linguistics or lack modern means and methods

of teaching language, especially writing skills" (M.Sajid. J.A.Siddiqui, 2015). In another word, Student can easily get affected by the teacher since he represents leadership and guidance, and obviously if the teacher has a low level in academic writing he will negatively affect the students. Strikwerda-Brown says in his paper "Student views of their teachers and schooling can influence motivation and interest in schooling as well as their approach to learning" (Strikwerda-Brown et al, 2008). In the other hand a teacher with brilliant academic writing skills will produce students able to deal with academic assignments.

### **1.6.3. The Lack of Interacting with Academic Materials**

In order to acclimate to the academic writing, the learner needs to interact with the academic materials. In this context, the academic materials are essays, research papers, dissertations, reports and research projects. In other words, if the learners' syllabus does not include lots of interactions with these materials, the learner will find himself quite lost facing academic assignments. Abd-El Khalick and Waters said that "These outcomes entail complex scientific inquiry skills and understandings that can be difficult to teach and are often nearly absent in science textbooks" (Abd-El-Khalick, Waters, and Le 2008), which means that dealing with academic and scientific materials will develop a specific skills that can not be found in the text-book or the syllabus which includes mostly literature piece of writings or topics that are dealt with in non-academic methods.

### **Conclusion**

As a conclusion for this chapter, we can say that academic writing is a well organized process that aims to present the scientific writings in a proper way. And through this chapter we now have a basic understanding of academic writing, its importance, and uses. We have seen the categories of academic writing that the academic community use in order to publish scientific, academic and formal writings. In addition to that, we mentioned a number of the challenges of learning and acquiring the academic writing needed skills by the learners. This

latter paved the way toward the section of academic writing difficulties where we dealt with a number of academic writing difficulties that learners may commit and the reasons behind them. Also we have clarified the reasons behind these various difficulties, which could be related to the academic background, teaching, or interaction. To bring this chapter to an end, we can say that academic writing is a complicated process that needs more attention from both the learner and the teacher in order to acquire it and come up with a proper academic production.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **OVERVIEW OF ACADEMIC WRITING**



## CHAPTER TWO

### OVEREVIEW OF ACADEMIC WRITING

#### 2. Literature review

##### 2.1. Introduction

##### 2.2. Studies on academic writing

##### 2.2.1. Studies on academic writing difficulties in global EFL contexts (South Africa, Japan, Malaysia ...)

2.1.1. Academic writing difficulties study in Malaysia

2.1.2. Academic writing difficulties study in Japan

2.1.3. Academic writing difficulties study in Namibia

##### 2.1.4. Academic writing difficulties study in South Africa

##### 2.2.2. Studies on academic writing in Arab EFL contexts (studies done with Arab speaking learners)

2.2.1. Academic writing difficulties study in Sudan

2.2.2. Academic writing difficulties study in Jordan

2.2.3. Academic writing difficulties study in Kuwait

##### 2.2.4. Academic writing difficulties study in Saudi Arabia

##### 2.3. Studies on academic writing difficulties in the English speaking countries

##### 2.3.1. Academic Writing Difficulties Study in Canada, Queen University

##### 2.3.2. Academic writing difficulties study in the University of Sunderland, United Kingdom

##### 2.3.3. Academic writing difficulties study in the University of Auckland New Zealand

##### 2.3.4. Academic writing difficulties study in the University of British Columbia, Canada

##### 2. Gaps in the literature

## **Introduction**

In this chapter, we will introduce a number of international studies about academic writing difficulties and its concerns, methods and findings. At first, we will start by reviewing a couple of international studies from English and non English speaking universities, at this part we will see how these studies transact with these difficulties, and focus on there findings from both categories (English natives and L1 students). As a second part of this chapter we will try to cover a number of studies about academic writing difficulties related to the Arab speaking countries, we also see how the researchers dealt these difficulties on an arab context, in addition to focusing on the findings and the categories of participants in their researches. In another word, this chapter will be a literature review of the studies related to academic writing difficulties, and its main concern is to address the gap in literature review and link it to the lack of studies about this topic in the Algerian context. By the end of this chapter, we will have a basic understanding about the academic writing difficulties around the world, from both native English speakers and L1 Students. In addition to that we will be able to shift to the practical part of this research work with enough theoretical point of views about the concept.

### **2.1 Studies on Academic Writing Difficulties**

Academic writing is one of the keys to success in the students' academic lives, yet also one of the most difficult skills to acquire in student's career. Therefore, many studies were made within the academic community in order to study the phenomena of committing academic mistakes. These difficulties faced by students are not always the same, it may differ from one community to another depending on many factors such us the position of English language in a certain country. Therefore, we will try to deal with studies about academic writing difficulties from different countries.

### **2.1.1 Studies on Academic Writing Difficulties in Global EFL Contexts**

Academic writing is any writing done to fulfill a requirement of a college or university and it is also used for publications that are read by the teacher and researchers or presented at conferences. Therefore, any kind of mistake can produce a non-academic production. In addition, for that a number of studies around the world were made in order to deal with the difficulties that both native English speakers and L1 students may face in their academic writing process. In this part, we will try to pass through a number of studies about academic writing difficulties around the world.

#### **2.1.1.1 Academic Writing Difficulties Study in Malaysia**

In the International Journal of Social Sciences a study were published by Rahma from the University of technology Malaysia under the name of Analyzing perceived writing difficulties through the social cognitive theory. In this study, Rahmat defined writing in the academic context as the most unliked skills from ESL student by saying "writing skill is among the least liked by many ESL students. Students find writing a tedious process"(Rahmat et al, 2017). In addition to that, she did not ignored the fact that teaching writing skills is also a complicated skill to be taught regarding to its complexity, Rahmat says "Teachers find writing a difficult skill to teach. Writing skill involves planning, writing, editing, and perhaps re-writing and these skills are not easily taught nor learnt". And she also said "Writing teachers would agree that among some of the reasons why students cannot write well is because they find ESL academic writing difficult"(Rahmat et al, 2017), which means that students admit that they face writing difficulties in academic context. This research looks into students' perceived difficulties towards ESL academic writing 373 students from seven faculties participated in this study. As a finding for this research Rahma reported that students from non-scientific branches focus on academic writing more than students from scientific branches, she insists that it does not mean that scientific students are

not a good writer, but she linked it to the fact that they consider academic writing as a means to complete their assignments and not as something they needed to give attention to.

### **2.1.2. Academic Writing Difficulties Study in Japan**

In the university of Kyoto Japan, Dalsky considered academic writing as one of the most important skills that the student must require, as well as he shared the fact that academic writing is a difficult skill to be learnt when he said "Academic writing is one of the keys to success if the students' academic lives, yet also one of the most difficult skills to learn" (Dalsky. 2006). In this paper the researcher aims to study the case of the Japanese students after adopting a new curriculum that uses English only, and for that he works to identify and report the difficulties that the students face in the process of academic writing after graduation from high school to first year in university. The scope of this research focused on to categories of people, First year students and Second year students of the University of Kyoto. The findings of this study were different from one category to another, about the first year students Dalsky reported that "The first-year students reported most difficulty with adapting to the transition from highschool particular English (English for general purposes) to university academic English (English for academic purposes)" (Dalsky. 2006). The changement of the use of English language from General or informal language to a formal language is considered to be a difficulty for these students especially when it comes to the formality of the style used and the rules of academic writing. In the second category the difficulties were different from the first-year, Dalsky said, "The second year student reported most difficulty with producing a coherent academic paragraph with no redundant sentences"(Dalsky. 2006). Second-year students are now used to the formality of academic English and they learnt to use an academic terminologies, but the difficulty faced by them is the coherently of paragraphs in order to produce a presentable academic writings.

### **2.1.3. Academic Writing Difficulties Study in Namibia**

In the University of Namibia, Katima Mulilo a study were made by Molly Muelezi Mutimani, The study reports the academic writing challenges experienced by bachelor students in the primary level. The research in this study tries to answer a number of questions in order to cover and understand the phenomena of academic writing difficulties in Namibia, The research started buy answering the question "what challenges did students face in academic writing at this campus?" (Mutimani. 2016). In this question Mutimani trying to clarify the kind of academic writing issues that the students are suffering from. In addition to that, Mutimani added another question in order to know the reasons and causes of these difficulties by asking the question "What were the students' and lecturers' perceptions of the possible causes of these academic writing challenges" (Mutimani. 2016). As an answer for this question many hypotheses were posted, for instance. the language background and use of informal language in the academic assignments. He also asked the question " were there any differences in writing challenges faced according to gender and the students' year of study ?" (Mutimani. 2016). in this question he tries to understand the differences between male and Female in the academic writing production. This research has a diversity of participants, They comprised 40 first year, 40 second year and 33 third year students, as well as 20 lecturers of the 2013 academic year. And the study used mixed methods, explanatory and sequential designs.

### **2.1.4. Academic Writing Difficulties Study in South Africa**

South Africa is considered to be a special case when it comes to the diversity of languages on it. And the number of official languages out there is 11, Banda says that " 11 languages have been designated official status, English is generally the de facto language of education" which means that South Africans can speak more than one language but English is used language in Education. Even Though South Africans speak English but that does not deny the

fact that South African student as many others around the world face challenges when it comes to Academic writing. Research has shown, on the contrary, that South Africa Black learners even in these private English-medium schools have major difficulties with English academic writing conventions (Alexander, 2005). In the University of the Western Cape South Africa Felix Banda Start a research about the challenges of teaching academic writing skills to students With limited exposure to English. The researcher show interest in some South African speaking students who showed little or no English proficiency, as determined from the quality of their spoken and written English in his communication course. He says "I became aware of a particular group of students that kept doing badly in my Year 2 English Communication course" (Banda. 2009). The study show that South African students like other students around the world share two important challenges which they are the limitation of Academic vocabulary and the use of everyday English language instead of the formal academic language. Banda say that "I determined that the students had a limited range of vocabulary, demonstrated poorly formulated linguistic and argument structures in English, and appeared to have difficulty distinguishing informal and formal (academic) styles of English" (Banda. 2009).

## **2.2. Studies on Academic Writing in Arab EFL Contexts**

Academic writing can be considered as an integral part of learning English process. By recognizing the arab learners academic writing difficulties and needs, we will come closer to understanding the Algerian academic writing difficulties and needs, and whether the reason behind committing these difficulties is related to the mother tongue. In addition to that, We will highlight the differences in learning academic writing between the arab learners and other learners around the world.

### **2.2.1. Academic Writing Difficulties Study in Sudan**

The Journal of English Education published a research made by Al Mubarak from the university of Al Imam Al Mahdi that investigates the phenomena of academic writing problems level faced by undergraduate students in Sudan. The research reported that academic writing skills are related to linguistic competence That the naive researchers may consider as a challenge. He says that " Academic writing skills mostly involve the linguistic competence development of the students which many English Second Language learners may identify it as a challenging task" (Al Mubarak, 2017). The main objective of this paper is to highlight the challenges encountered by English Second language students in academic writing that they are going to graduate. in another word, this research work to identify the academic writing problems faced by the students of the college of Arts in University of Al Imam Al Mahdi, Sudan. The researcher used the students' project graduation to investigate the problems faced by the participants when they used their academic writing skills. To state the issues and produce a propre academic work. The method used in this research is descriptive. Finally, The Findings of this research are a collection of problematics that the researchers faced such as: Use of articles, Punctuation, Use of prepositions, Use of irregular verbs poor expressions Consistency, Unparalleled structure, And verb tense.

### **2.2.2. Academic Writing Difficulties Study in Jordan**

The Arabs like any other L2 English learners face a number of difficulties while writing in English academically. a research made in the university of the World Islamic Sciences and Education Jordan by Khalaf Ibnian to report writing difficulties encountered by jordanian EFL learners. The current study aimed at exploring difficulties that university students face when they write in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It also aimed at proposing solutions to help EFL learners overcome writing difficulties. The number of participants comprised from 82 English students from the University of the World Islamic Sciences and Education.

open ended questions is also included in the questionnaire in order to suggest and find solutions for the difficulties that face The students. The findings of this study show that the top difficulty faced by the Jordanian students is “lack of ideas”, followed by “the incorrect use of mechanics of writing”. The study also revealed that “lack of clear assessment instruments and marking schemes” occupied the third rank, while “time restriction” ranked fourth. the findings also show that the wrong method used to teach students has a remarkable effect on the students writings in addition to the and vocabulary restriction, while “topic inappropriateness” and “lack of materials for consulting” were also mentioned as one of the reasons behind writing inappropriately. Finally, “grammar difficulties” and “lack of teacher's help”.

### **2.2.3. Academic Writing Difficulties Study in Kuwait**

In The University of Gulf for Science and Technology, Kuwait. Umair Made a research to report The problems of multi-ability academic English writing classes in Arab countries. The aim of English language teachers and students of Arab countries strive to fulfill the academic demand of universities and to come over the difficulties of academic English writing, which call for detailed, organized, cohesive as well as structured academic papers. Therefore, this research aim to highlight the common causes of the problems of academic English writing course in multi-ability classes. This study was made in one semester period (sixteen week). In this study Different teaching and evaluation methods are used to teach the diverse abilities in multi-level classes to achieve the set goals of the academic English writing course, and to highlight the problem of multi-ability academic English writing. The researcher used the final grades of the semester in order to investigate the difference in the performance of students coming from public and private school background. As a Conclusion Umir says "The study concludes that the difference of the language insight of the students coming from different school background leads to problems in teaching and learning not only in the Arab countries"



(Umir.2011). in another word Umir means that the diversity of abilities within students come from their educational background, that could be public and private school.

#### **2.2.4. Academic Writing Difficulties Study in Saudi Arabia**

In The King Saud University a study were made by Al-Mansour to report teaching academic writing to undergraduate saudi students by highlighting the problems and solutions. This study aims to investigating the effect of academic writing on the writing performance of Saudi EFL university students. The study also highlighted and points out learning problems that limit the students abilities and interest of the students at the College in the process of acquiring a good writing skill and becoming successful translators. The number of participants in this study is 68 students from the King Saud University, The research also made a controlled group of 3 students in order to observe the effect of academic writing on the students' writing performance. Data of the study were collected within two months period via a pre-post test design for equivalent groups. The controlled group of 3 students were taught by a regular teacher, while the experimental group of was taught by the researcher himself in order to observe and report whether the academic writing affect the writing performance of the students of EFL. As a result for this research, Al-Mansour says " the experiment group outperformed the control group on the measure" (Al-Mansour, 2015), which means that teaching academic writing will affect the students writing performance positively.

### **2.3. Studies on Academic Writing Difficulties in the English Speaking Countries**

The issues of academic writing are not only limited to the non-native speakers of English, also native speakers face a number of challenges when it comes to writing academically. Therefore, we brought a number of researches that reports the academic writing difficulties that the English native speakers face in higher education.

#### **2.3.1. Academic Writing Difficulties Study in Canada, Queen University**

In The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language a study were published by Myles from the canadian university Queen. The study reports the second language Writing and research focusing on the writing process and error analysis in student texts. Myles clarified the fact that academic writing needs too much efforts in order to acquire it when he said "Academic writing requires conscious effort and much practice in composing, developing, and analyzing ideas" (Myles. 2002). Since academic writing difficulties are not only limited to the L2 students, Myles worked to compare between the approaches used to teach academic writing for both L1 students and L2 students. He took in consider that L2 students may face more difficulties writing academically because their academic production can be affected by social and cognitive challenges related to second language acquisition, Myles highlighted this issue by saying "Students writing in a second language are also faced with social and cognitive challenges related to second language acquisition" (Myles. 2002). This research also mention that the models used in teaching academic writing that are suppose to target L1 students are also used to teach L2 student forgetting language proficiency and competence of L2 students toward English language, Myles said " L1 models of writing instruction and research on composing processes have been the theoretical basis for using the process approach in L2 writing pedagogy" (Myles. 2002). He means that the use of these models is the reason behind affecting the academic writing production of L2 students because it does no serve or take in consider neither the language proficiency nor competence. The general aim of this study is to explore the error in writing in relation to particular aspects of second language acquisition and theories of the writing process in L1 and L2. In other words, this research aims to clarify that the approaches used to teach academic writing to L2 students may affect their academic writing productivity because it only directed to students with good language skills like L1 students.

### **2.3.2. Academic Writing Difficulties Study in the University of Sunderland,UK**

Both native and non-native speakers of English language can commit mistakes in writing academically, the level of committing these difficulties can be different, and the reason behind it as well. Therefore, a research was made in the University of Sunderland in England in order to report the difficulties that face both Native speakers/learners who were born and educated in Britain, and non-native participants that are nationals of Mainland China and Libya. This comparison was made in order to determine similarities and differences in strategies employed by the three groups (British, Libyans, and Chinese) as well as to provide possible explanations for the findings of this study. This research uses a mixture of quantitative (structured questionnaire) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews) approaches. The results of the first part of this study were primarily based on a questionnaire completed by 302 higher education students from the University of Sunderland. This examination shows a remarkable difference between the Native learners and non-native learners in several aspects, Abdul-Rahman says that "This examination patterns and variations among NSE and NNSE academic writing use, finding important differences between these groups in terms of their nativeness, nationality, gender, age, qualification, length of residence in the UK, IELTS score, and subject area" (S.S.Abdul-Rahman. 2011). The second part focused on making an interview with 12 students from UK, Libya, and China. In that interview the research had a deeper understanding of how both Natives and non-natives overcome their academic writing difficulties and how they both act in a specific occasion, Abdul-Rahman clarified this stage of research when he said "these findings indicated that even on the occasions when NSE and NNSE use a similar strategy they tend to approach it differently" (S.S.Abdul-Rahman. 2011). As a result for this research Abdul-Rahman highlighted the importance of teaching English Language and Academic language when he said "The outcome of this research, therefore, are important in informing pedagogy on the one hand for

two countries where the learning of English has become an important educational requirement and on the other for a country where teaching English is a growth industry" (S.S.Abdul-Rahman. 2011).

### **2.3.3. Academic Writing Difficulties Study in the University of Auckland New Zealand**

New Zealand is also known for receiving a remarkable number of foreign students, and as it was already mentioned before, foreign students often face a number of academic writing difficulties. Ankawi made a study in the university of Auckland, and this study investigated the academic writing challenges facing Saudi Arabian students when they enrol on mainstream programmes at one New Zealand university. The approach used on this research is qualitative method. The participants in this research are all Saudis that study in New Zealand , and the number of involved students in this research is 65. A survey was used by the researcher in order to collect demographic information, and 10 students volunteer in order to have an interview to share their views about their English academic writing skills and what have they done in order to prepare themselves to study in an English medium universities. The findings of this research show that the saudi students attitudes toward academic English is Negative, this was due to their previous academic background. In another word, the reason behind the negative attitude is related to the method used to teach English and academic English.

### **2.3.4. Academic Writing Difficulties Study in the University of British Columbia, Canada**

In most of cases, researchers believe that organizational problems in academic writing by second language learners are often related to interference between first language and second language. But recent studies reported that the problem of organization in academic writing could have other reasons. In this research Winnie Au-Yeung Lo and other researchers from the University of British Columbia have done research about academic writing and chinese

students and focused more on transfer and developmental factors. The researchers took the example of Chinese language because it differs completely from when it comes to the composition of sentences and Discourse. But they also believe that there is no support for the claims that the composition of these two languages is different from each other when Au-Yeung says "an examination of classical texts and modern works on Chinese composition found no support for claims that the organizational pattern of Chinese writing differs markedly from that of English" (Au-Yeung, 1985). In order to understand the problem behind having academic writing difficulties among the Chinese students, the researchers made a comparison between Hong Kong and British Columbia English teaching, and the studies show that the studies' experiences that they had focused more on the sentence level than the development of appropriate discourse of English language, Au-Yeung says "school experience with English composition was oriented more toward accuracy at the sentence level than toward the development of appropriate discourse organization" (Au-Yeung, 1985). These findings point to a need for greater awareness of students' native literacy and educational experience as factors influencing the development of academic writing in a second language.

## **2. Gaps in the literature**

There are studies on perceived academic writing difficulties but there is less focus on the perceived academic writing difficulties of Arab learners of English.

Furthermore, and while there are some studies with Arabic EFL learners, there is a lack of studies with Algerian EFL learners.

Therefore, and to address this gap in the literature, the current study attempts to explore the academic writing difficulties faced by Algerian EFL learners studying in the UK. To address this aim the following research questions were asked:

- 1) To what extent do Algerian EFL learners studying in the UK find academic writing at a postgraduate level difficult?
- 2) What type of academic writing difficulties do Algerian EFL learners in the UK face?
- 3) How often do Algerian EFL learners face academic those academic writing difficulties?

## **Conclusion**

As a conclusion for this chapter, academic writing difficulties is not only related to foreign language learners or L2 learners, even native speakers may face a number of academic writing difficulties. And as we mentioned before, academic writing is one of the keys to success in the students' academic lives, yet also one of the most difficult skills to acquire in student's career. In other word, Academic writing is a issues that most of students around the world struggle with, but the kind of difficulties they face differ from one context to another. And for that, the coming chapter will clarify the kind of academic writing difficulties that the Algerian students face during their PhD degree in the UK. Additionally we will try to clarify the reason behind them.

# **Chapter Three**

## **Methodology, Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results**



**Chapter Three:**  
**Methodology, Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results**

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## **Introduction**

As mentioned earlier, this study aims to investigate the perceived academic writing difficulties faced by the PhD Algerian students in the United Kingdom. And to answer the previous research questions, the current study employed a semi-structured online questionnaire that was completed by 49 Algerian EFL students in the UK. This chapter introduces and explains the methodology used to analyze the results that answers the research questions of the current study. Additionally, it outlines the research design, describes the sampling process, the data collection and data analysis procedures adopted in the study, as well as the ethical procedures which were taken into consideration. Furthermore, taking this research only from a theoretical point of view cannot be enough to highlight the academic writing difficulties faced by Algerian doctoral students in the UK. In this chapter we are also going to share the results of the questionnaire and discussion in order to come up with an answer for the research questions.

The results that will be shared are from section two and three from the questionnaire. First, in the second section, which is titled by Academic writing, we will study the relationship between the participants and academic writing, and their previous learning background about the module. Secondly, in the Third section, which is titled by Academic writing difficulties, we will highlight the difficulties faced by Algerian PhD candidates, the extent of difficulties, and how often do they face them. We will also address the reasons behind facing these difficulties from the point of view of the participants. At the end of this chapter we will gain some results that will help us understand the current situation of the academic writing for the expatriated Algerian students in the UK, in addition to that, we will be able to highlight the academic writing difficulties and to understand the reasons behind struggling with these difficulties.

### 3.1 Context & Participants

This study took place with 49 Algerian PhD students in the UK (42) females (7) males. The criteria of the participation impose the students to be educated in Algeria and they must be currently studying in one of the UK's universities, The age of participants ranges between 23 to 29 years old. The participants' undergraduate educational background is mainly in the field of English language and literature. And their postgraduate specialities vary from English literature, applied linguistics, TEFL/TESOL, Didactics, Language and Culture field. At the time of answering the questionnaire, all of the participants were doing their PhD studies in the UK and they spent at least between 1 to 5 years out there after completing a national scholarly exam. They came from different departments in Algeria, and to study in the UK, participants had to take the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam. The IELTS scores of participants should be range between (6 - 8).

While the study was interested in Algerian English graduates who are doing their PhD studies in the UK, it was challenging to get access to most of them. For this reason, the current study employed the snowball method to participants' recruitment whereby the target participants were asked if they know other Algerian EFL students (with an Algerian postgraduate experience) in the UK, and they shared the online questionnaire to each other. This helped in maximizing the chances of finding more participants of the target population.

Number and gender	(42) females- (7) males
Age	23-29 years old
Time already spent in UK	1-5 years
Major	English literature (14), Applied linguistics (11), TEFL/ TESOL (4), Didactics(12), Language and Culture (1)

IELTS overall score	Between 6-8
IELTS writing score	Between 5-8

***Table 3.1 Participants***

### **3.2 Data collection Method**

This study used an online survey website called Google Form ([www.google.com/forms/](http://www.google.com/forms/)), which provides an online service for collecting and organizing information. And it was chosen because it is easy to use, trusted, and widely known.

The current study employed a semi-structured questionnaire divided into three sections. The aim of this questionnaire is to provide information about the academic writing difficulties faced by Algerian PhD students in the UK, and to what extent can the writing previous learning experiences in Algeria affect its' PhD students in the UK. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section was designed as profile information where the learner fills personal information and some previous education background, as well as some information that represents their situation in the UK. The second section was to investigate the learners' relationship with academic writing, and how much they were used to academic assignments. And they were allowed to share their own point of view about their academic writing experience. The final section was designed to investigate learners' academic writing difficulties in the UK higher education context, how often they face them, and the reasons behind encountering such difficulties.

As mentioned, the questionnaire was submitted and completed online using the online service Google Forms. It was shared through email and social networking sites.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

Since the primary purpose of the research is to highlight the academic writing difficulties faced by the Algerian PhD candidates in the UK, the questionnaire took a semi-structured design, the analysis of the results were both quantitative and qualitative. The data were

analysed in two phases, first, a statistical analysis of the data collected by means of the questionnaire. The quantitative analysis was mainly carried out with questions aiming to generate statistics. The statistical results were analyzed using the Google Forms' graph and table systems. The questions were analyzed to generate the descriptive statistics (means and percentages). Priority was first given to the analysis of the quantitative data. Completed questionnaires were designed and coded. Each questionnaire was scrutinised by the researcher to examine the response pattern and identify abnormalities in the completion of questionnaires. Descriptive statistics that included frequencies and percentages were used for analysis of data in the first phase.

The analysis of the answers to this open-ended question was conducted in Google Sheets using the thematic coding method. This facilitated the process of summarizing and categorizing the answers of participants into concise and precise topics. We first starts by identifying themes or patterns that may consist of ideas, concepts, behaviors, interactions, phrases and so forth. After that, we gave a code to those pieces of data in an effort to label the data and make it easier to organize and retrieve. The coding planning we made helped to provide a framework that will structure, label and define the data. In other words, the code planning helped organize the date into categories.

### **3.4 Pilot Testing of the Questionnaire**

Firstly, the validity of the questionnaires was achieved by conducting a pilot study. The questionnaire was piloted with three participants from the target population, the students were given a questionnaire to complete. Based on their answers, some of the questions were edited for their clarity and precision in generating the required data. The questions were approximately clear enough, but after a number of modification that was done with the help of the students, we come up with clear and direct questions for the candidates. The three students gave the needed answers to the questions. At the end we applied some changes that

will make the questionnaire concise and precise regarding the limited time that the PhD candidates have.

### 3.5 Ethics of Conducting Research

This questionnaire is part of an MA study at the University of Biskra, Algeria. Students' answers will be used only to address the research academic objectives. The information they provided will be secured in a personal online drive and will be categorized on the basis of the study and not on personal information. No data provided in this questionnaire will be used for a purpose other than addressing the research questions.

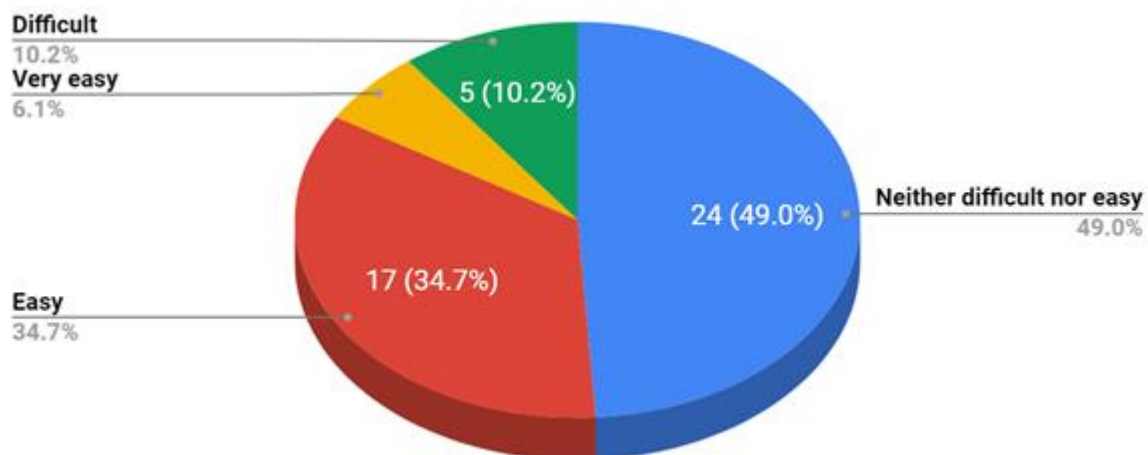
All of the participants were informed about the purpose of the study and were provided with a detailed explanation on how the information they provided will be protected and used.

### 4.1 Analysis of the Questionnaire

#### 4.1.1 Section one: Academic Writing

##### Item 1. Students' difficulty of Academic Writing Assignments in English

In this research, the participants shared the extent of difficulty of academic writing assignments. The following graphs show the statistics of the extent of difficulties faced by Algerian PhD candidates during writing an academic assignments:



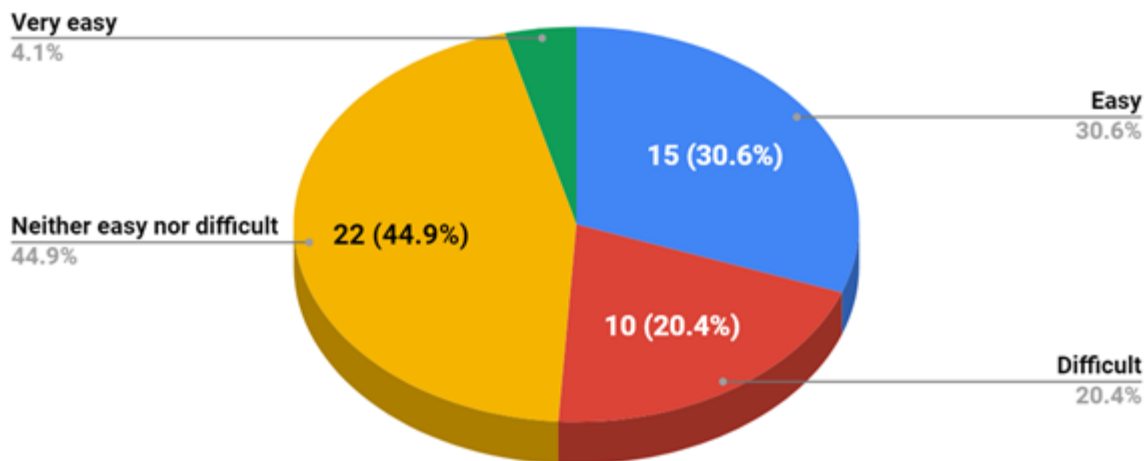
*Figure 4.1.1. Students' difficulty of academic writing assignments in English*

According to the responses shown in the graph one (**Figure 4.1**), approximately half of the participants considered academic writing assignments in English neither difficult nor easy. This result represents 49% of the participants. Additionally, 34.7% of the participants considered it to be an easy task to deal with. And 10.2% find English assignments as a difficult task. Finally only 6.1% consider it as a very easy task.

According to the reports of participants in the questionnaire, academic writing assignments in English is not considered as a hard task for the Algerian Phd students, and that Algerian PhD candidates are able to produce an academic writing.

**Item 2. The Extent of Academic Writing Difficulty During MA Degree in Algeria**

In the survey results, the Algerian PhD candidates in the UK shared the extent of academic writing difficulty during their MA degree in Algeria. The next graph shows statistics about the extent of academic writing difficulty that the participants faced during their MA degree Back in Algeria:



*Figure 4.2 Students’ academic writing difficulty during their MA degree in Algeria*

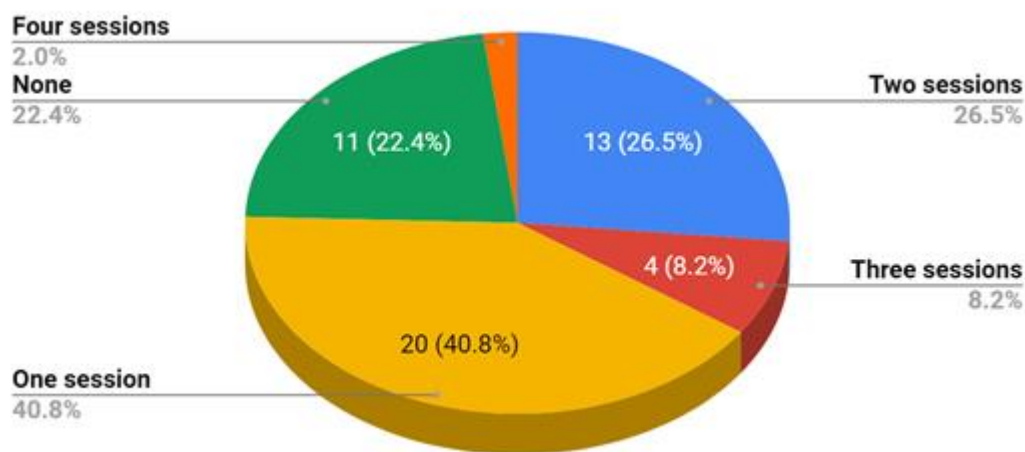
In this item, it was found that 44.9% of the participants consider academic writing during their MA degree in Algeria is neither easy nor difficult. Additionally, 30.6% of the participants reported that academic writing was easy to deal with. And only 20.4% of the

candidates consider Academic writing in their MA degree in Algeria difficult. Finally 4.1% shared that it was a Very easy task to handle in their MA degree back in Algeria.

The results obtained in graph two (**Figure 4.2**) indicate that most of the Algerian PhD candidates in the UK did not face issues writing academically in their MA degree in Algeria.

### **Item 3. The Academic Writing Experience of Algerian EFL Postgraduate Students in Algeria**

Participants' answers about the number of academic writing sessions in their Algerian postgraduate experience varied. The following graph summarizes some statistics about the number of sessions of academic writing that the participants of the current study used to have during their MA degree:



*Figure 4.3 The number of academic writing sessions in Algeria*

According to the answers for this questionnaire item, most of the participants reported that they used to have only one session. This result was reported with 40.8% of the participants. Additionally, 26.5% of the participants used to have two sessions a week. And 22.4% of the participants had no academic writing classes, also 8.2% had three sessions a week in their MA degree, and only 2% had four sessions of academic writing.

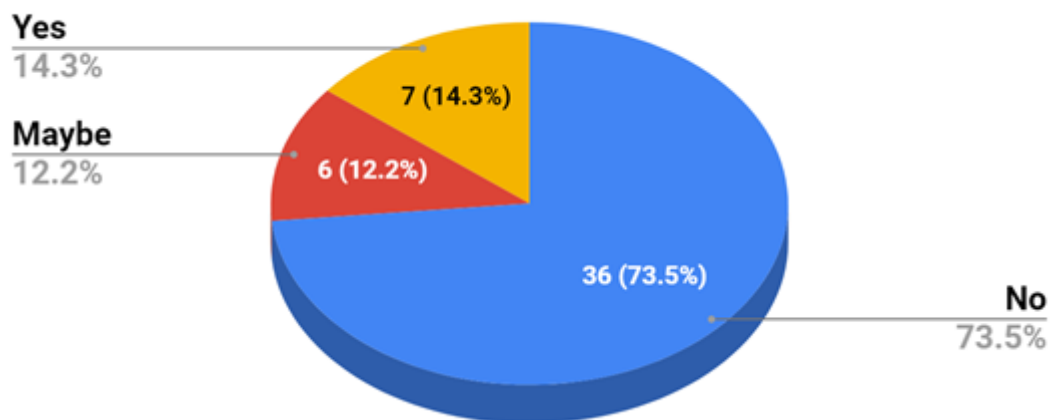
According to the reports of participants in the questionnaire, there was a scarcity in academic writing sessions during their MA degree. This can reflect a lack of practice for



these participants which might influence their experience at the doctoral level in the UK. This is especially important because such an advanced academic level requires expensive and autonomous writing.

#### **Item 4. Writing Assignments During Your MA Degree in Algeria**

The Algerian PhD candidates in the UK answered whether they had enough academic writing assignments or no. The following graphs show the statistics about whether the participants are satisfied with the number of academic assignments they had in their MA degree in Algeria or no:



*Figure 4.4 Academic writing assignments during your MA degree in Algeria*

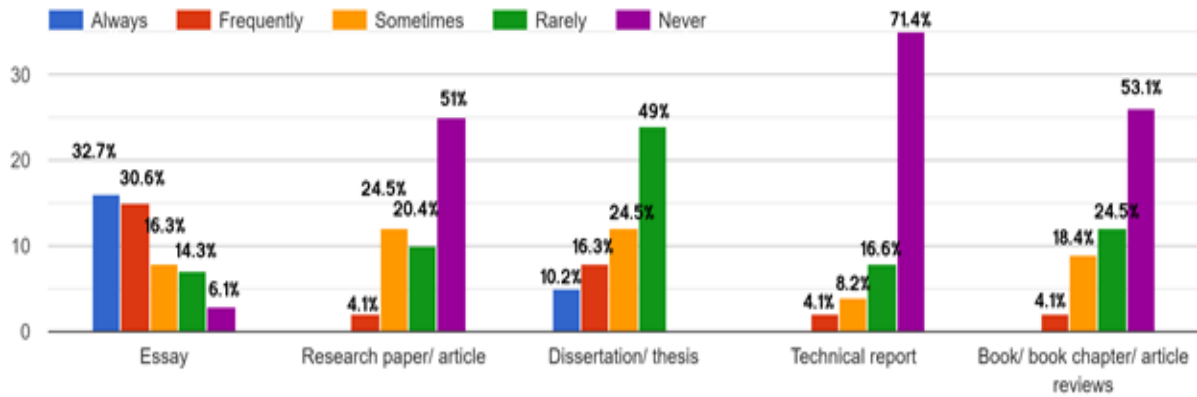
As seen in the graph (**Figure 4.4**) more than half of the participants answered by No. This result was reported with 73.5%. Additionally, only 14.3% of the candidates are satisfied from the number of academic assignments they had in their MA in Algeria. While 12.2% of the participants are not sure if they had enough assignments or no.

As shown in the results, Most of the Algerian PhD candidates are not satisfied about the number of academic writings they had in their MA degree in Algeria. And this can negatively reflect on one of the most important skills in their higher education career which is academic writing. The results show that most of participants are not satisfied because they believe they had insufficient training, they also reported that they had a lack of practice during their

academic writing classes, other participants also indicate that they did not have a variety of assignments, one of the participants says “We were asked to write essays but it was not enough”. Other participants blamed the syllabus and they believed that it was designed in a way that do not serve their academic needs, one of the participants says “The module allocated for enhancing our academic writing skills was randomly designed or does not have a rigid design at all. The tutor tends to improvise in the sense that either of the skills (speaking and writing) was poorly, and there were neither content nor consistency in the sessions”. Lack of time was also reported as one of the reasons for not getting enough academic writing assignments, a participant mentioned that they had too many modules and it was impossible to give one writing assignment per module. The candidates also believe that they needed feedback after doing their writing assignments, one of the participants shared an important statements when he said “Because we had not that opportunity to improve our academic writing where our mistakes can be highlighted and corrected”. Academic writing is an important skill in the academic career, and assignments are an essential instrument that should be used in order to develop the learners skills, Thomas says in his research paper “Assignments are part of the internal evaluation process, which would be of immense value as an additional learning instrument” (Thomas, 2017). The main purpose of assignments is to increase the learning capabilities of students. The more we use our brains, the more they develop.

#### **Item 5. The Diversity of Academic Assignments During MA Degree in Algeria**

Participants’ answers about how often they were asked to do specific academic writing assignments in their MA degree in Algeria. The following graphs highlights statistics about how often the PhD Algerian candidates used to have specific academic writing assignments during their MA degree in Algeria:



*Figure 4.5. The Diversity of Academic Assignments During MA Degree in Algeria*

The results obtained in (Figure 4.5) indicate that 32.7% of the participants reported that they always had essays as assignments, 30.6% said that they frequently have done essays as an assignment. On the other hand 16.3% of the participants sometimes had essays. In addition to that 14.3% rarely had essays. And only 6.1% of the participants reported that they have never done an essay as an academic writing assignment in their MA degree in Algeria. The results also show how often the participants had research paper or article as academic assignments, the results indicates that more than half of the participants never had research paper nor article as academic assignments that was resulted with 51% of the total number, 24.5% of the participants says that they sometimes had research paper and article. And also 20.4% rarely had them as an assignment, and only 4.1% frequently had these assignments in their MA studies in Algeria. Moving to dissertation and thesis, as seen in the graph, approximately half of the participants rarely had dissertation and thesis as assignments; this result was reported with 49% of the participants. 24.5% sometimes had them as assignments. And 16.3% of the participants frequently had these assignments. And only 10.2% says that they always had dissertations and thesis as assignments in their MA studies. According to the results the graph also show that more than half of the participants never had a technical report

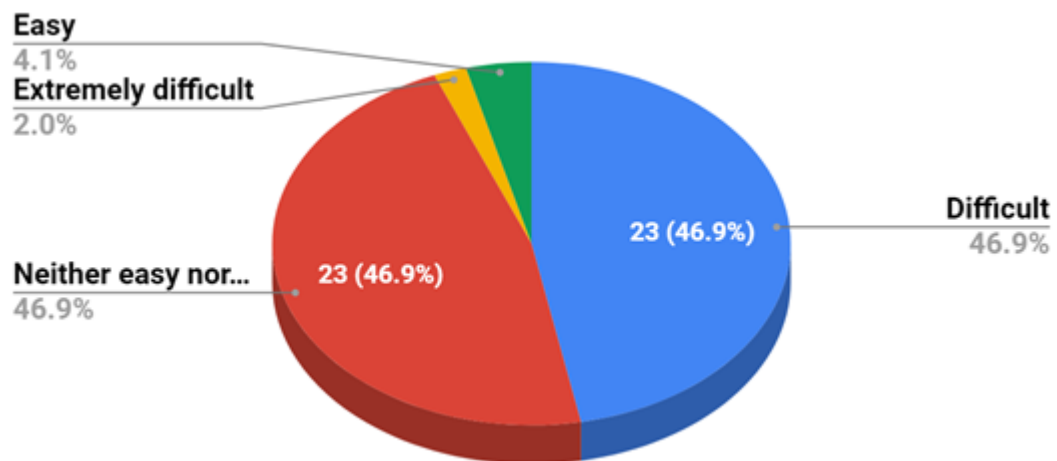
as an assignment in their MA degree in Algeria, This result was reported with 71.4% of the candidates. Additionally, 16.6% reported that they rarely had such an assignment. And only 8.2% of the participants think that they sometimes had to deal with such assignments. And only 4.1% frequently had these assignments. The findings also show 53.1% of the participants never had book, book chapter nor article reviews as assignments. On the other hand, 24.5% says that they rarely done any of these assignments. And 18.4% sometimes had these assignments during their MA degree. Finally, only 4.1% of the participants think that they frequently had a book review, book chapter or an article to review in their MA degree in Algeria.

According to the reports of participants in the questionnaire, there is no variety in the assignments giving to the student in the MA degree in Algeria. Most of students only deal with essays while the diversity of academic writings is important to develop their skills. Students need a variety of writing an assignment so his knowledge about a topic will be broadened. He will gain experience in the process of doing research and in the third place one's ability to formulate and write improves immensely. The ability to write writing academically is not something that happens automatically. Good academic writing are inculcated through regular practice and a deliberate effort to keep on evaluating your work against the stated criteria and to improve what was done incorrectly. In another world, in order to be good in academic writing the student need to pass through a diversity of assignments that will develop his skill. Thomas says that “ As a part of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, students are entrusted with several types of assignments, Each of these assignments has its own structure and features with unique writing styles, depending on the learning situations and training needs” (Thomas, 2017).

#### 4.1.2 Section one: Academic Writing Difficulties

##### Item 6. The extent of difficulty of academic writing during PhD degree in the UK

In this question the Algerian PhD candidates have been asked about the extent of academic writing difficulty during their PhD degree in the United Kingdom. The following graph show statistics about the level of difficulty of academic writing that the Algerian PhD candidates faced during their Doctoral degree:



*Figure 4.6 The extent of difficulty of academic writing during PhD degree in the UK*

Survey results in this research show 46.9% of the participants said that academic writing is difficult during the PhD degree in the UK. On the other hand, the same percentage 46.9% think that academic writing is neither easy nor difficult. Additionally, 4.1% of the participants consider it easy and only 2% said that academic writing is extremely difficult during the PhD degree in the UK.

When we look at **(Figure 4.6)**, we can see that approximately half of the participants think that academic writing is difficult for them which could be caused by the lack of practice and other limitations they had in their previous degrees.

##### Item 7. The Academic Writing Difficulties During Their PhD Thesis in the UK

In this survey the participants answered about the kinds of academic writing difficulties they faced in their PhD thesis in the UK. The following tables show the statistics of the extent

of a specific kind of difficulties that they faced during their Doctoral thesis in the United Kingdom.

**Item 7.1. Academic Writing Difficulties (paraphrasing, quoting and summarizing)**

<b>paraphrasing, quoting and summarizing</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
<b>Always</b>	4.1%	2
<b>Frequently</b>	30.6%	15
<b>Sometimes</b>	32.7%	16
<b>Rarely</b>	26.5%	13
<b>Never</b>	6.1%	3

*Table 4.7.1 Academic writing difficulties (paraphrasing, quoting and summarizing)*

The results obtained in **table 4.7**. Indicates that 32.7% of the participants sometimes faced paraphrasing, quoting and summarizing difficulties. And 30.6% of the candidates frequently faced these difficulties. On the other hand 26.5% rarely faced them. Additionally, 6.1% reported that they never faced these kinds of difficulties and only 4.1% said that they always come across issues related to paraphrasing, quoting and summarizing difficulties during their PhD thesis in the UK.

**Item 7.2. Academic Writing Difficulties (referencing and citations)**

<b>referencing and citations</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
<b>Always</b>	8.2%	4
<b>Frequently</b>	18.4%	9
<b>Sometimes</b>	22.4%	11
<b>Rarely</b>	38.8%	19
<b>Never</b>	12.2%	6

*Table 4.7.2. Academic writing difficulties (referencing and citations)*

The results also show that 38.8% of the participants rarely faced referencing and citations problems during their thesis, but on the other hand, 22.4% of the participants sometimes have these issues and 18.4% of the candidates said that they frequently face these academic writing difficulties. In addition to that, 12.2% reported that they never had these difficulties. And only 8.2% of the participants said that they always face referencing and citations difficulties during their PhD thesis.

**Item 7.3 Academic Writing Difficulties (Academic language)**

<b>Academic language</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
<b>Always</b>	6.1%	3
<b>Frequently</b>	40.8%	20
<b>Sometimes</b>	32.7%	16
<b>Rarely</b>	16.3%	8
<b>Never</b>	4.1%	2

*Table 4.7.3 Academic writing Difficulties (Academic language)*

In the results we can also see that 40.8% of the participants frequently have academic language problem while writing their PhD thesis, additionally 32.7% of the candidates said that they sometimes face this difficulty, but 16.3% of them shared that they rarely suffered from this academic writing difficulty, and only 6.1% always faced it, while only 4.1% said that they never had academic language difficulty before.

**Item 7.4 Academic Writing Difficulties (Coherence and cohesion)**

<b>Coherence and cohesion</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
<b>Always</b>	4.1%	2
<b>Frequently</b>	40.8%	20
<b>Sometimes</b>	34.7%	17
<b>Rarely</b>	12.2%	6
<b>Never</b>	8.2%	4

*Table 4.7.4. Academic Writing Difficulties (Coherence and cohesion)*

The result also indicates that 40.8% of the Algerian PhD candidates in the UK frequently made coherence and cohesion mistakes, and 34.7% sometimes come across this difficulty, 12.2% said that they rarely faced it, and 8.2% of the participants shared that they never faced coherence and cohesion difficulties, and only 4.1% said that they always face this difficulty during their PhD thesis.



**Item 7.5. Academic Writing Difficulties (Critical writing)**

Critical writing	Percentage	Number of participants
Always	22.4%	11
Frequently	42.9%	21
Sometimes	20.4%	10
Rarely	8.2%	4
Never	6.1%	3

*Table 4.7.5. Academic writing difficulties (critical writing)*

The **figure 4.7** also highlighted the following statistics. 42.9% of the participants said that they frequently face critical writing difficulties, while 22.4% always come across this difficulty, in addition to that 20.4% said that they sometimes struggle with it. On the other hand 8.2% rarely face this academic writing difficulty, and only 6.1% of the participants shared that they never suffered critical writing difficulties during their thesis in the UK.

**Item 7.6. Academic Writing Difficulties (Navigating the literature (books/ articles))**

Navigating the literature (books/ articles)	Percentage	Number of participants
Always	12.2%	6
Frequently	18.4%	9
Sometimes	36.7%	18
Rarely	24.5%	12
Never	8.2%	4

*Table 4.7.6 Academic writing difficulties (Navigating the literature (books/ articles)).*

The findings also indicates that 36.7% of the participants sometimes face problems Navigating the literature (books/ articles), but 24.5% rarely suffer from that issue and 18.4% frequently struggle with this difficulty, it is also shared that 12.2% always come across this writing problem and only 8.2% never had a problem navigating the literature of their thesis in the United kingdom.

**Item 7.7. Academic Writing Difficulties (vocabulary)**

<b>vocabulary</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
<b>Always</b>	4.1%	2
<b>Frequently</b>	22.4%	11
<b>Sometimes</b>	36.7%	18
<b>Rarely</b>	30.6%	15
<b>Never</b>	6.1%	3

*Table 4.7.7. Academic writing difficulties (vocabulary).*

In this research, the survey also indicates that 36.7% of the candidates sometimes face vocabulary difficulties, while 30.6% of the participants rarely come across the same problem, on the other hand 22.4% of the participants frequently face vocabulary difficulties, but only 6.1% never had this issue, and 4.1% always struggle with this issue.

**Item 7.8. Academic Writing Difficulties (Grammatical accuracy)**

<b>Grammatical accuracy</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
<b>Always</b>	0%	0
<b>Frequently</b>	16.3%	8
<b>Sometimes</b>	26.5%	13
<b>Rarely</b>	34.7%	17
<b>Never</b>	22.4%	11

*Table 4.7.8. Academic writing difficulties (grammatical accuracy).*

The results in the graph also indicates that 34.7% of the participants rarely face grammatical accuracy difficulties, and 26.5% sometimes face this academic difficulty, while 22.4% never struggle from this problem, and 16.3% of the participants frequently face grammatical accuracy during their thesis in the UK.

**Item 7.9. Academic Writing Difficulties (The nature of their topic)**

<b>The nature of their topic</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
<b>Always</b>	6.1%	3
<b>Frequently</b>	16.3%	10
<b>Sometimes</b>	20.4%	18
<b>Rarely</b>	30.6%	15
<b>Never</b>	6.1%	3

*Table 4.7.9. Academic writing difficulties (The nature of their topic).*

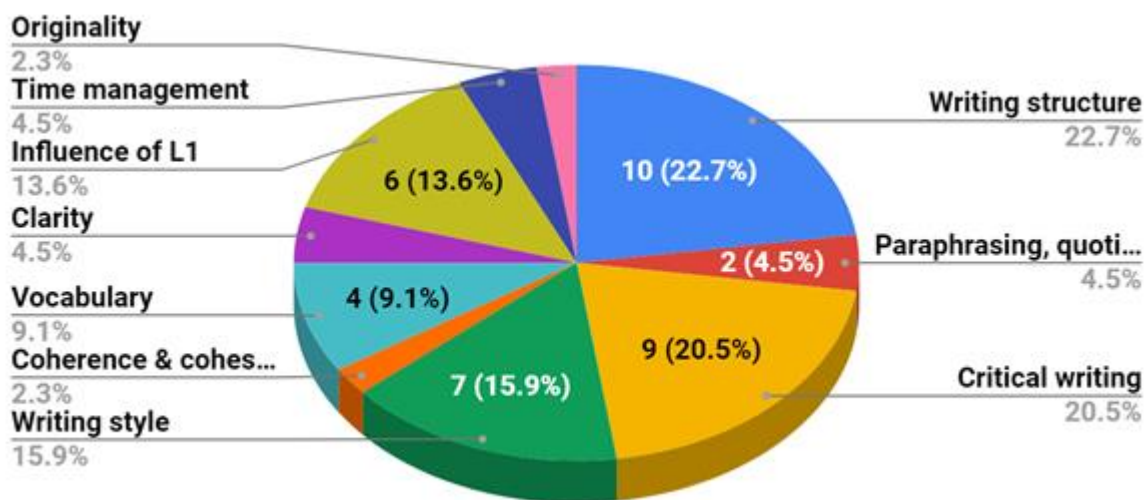
When we look at the results we can also see that 36.7% of the participants sometimes face difficulties with the nature of their topic. 30.6% said that they rarely struggle from this difficulty while 20.4% shared in the results that they frequently come across this academic writing problem, in addition to that 6.1% said that they always face it, but only 6.1% said that they never faced a difficulty related to the nature of their topic.

According to participants' answers, Academic language, coherence and cohesion and critical writing were considered to be the academic difficulties that they faced the most during their doctoral studies. Based on students' responses, the data indicates that a considerable number of them (22 out of 49) are aware of the importance of coherence and cohesion in academic writing, yet they find achieving them quite difficult. Wenyu and Yang (2008) indicate that students who follow a clear outline and plan find it easy to organize their ideas and relate them to each other. Critical thinking or finding their own individual voice among other writers' voices is problematic for (32 out of 49) of the Algerian PhD candidates in the UK. That could be because they sometimes do not have enough background information about the issue they are writing about. Another reason might be the lack of confidence. Learners may feel they are not as experts as those writers who are both experienced and intelligent so they can involve their critical thinking within their thesis. Becker (1986, cited in Murry & Moore, 2006) comments on that by advising students to never underestimate their aptitudes for skillfully expressing their own views. Writers usually aim at producing a piece of writing where the vocabulary is carefully chosen, but mastering academic language is a challenge for all students. Any learner may struggle with tasks that require proficiency with Academic Language, according to the participants (23 out of 49) struggle from the academic language, Willis (2013) indicates that Academic Language is believed to be one of the most important factors in the academic success of English Language learners (ELLs), and it has been shown to be a major contributor to achievement

gaps between ELLs and English-proficient students.

### Item 8. Other Academic Writing Difficulties Faced by the Algerian PhD Candidates in the UK

In this question, the Participants answered whether they faced other academic writing difficulties rather than the perceived ones in **figure 4.7** The following graph represents the statistics of other academic writing difficulties that the Algerian candidates faced during their PhD degree in the UK.



**Figure 4.8 Other academic writing difficulties Faced by the Algerian PhD candidates in the UK**

According to **figure 4.8** we can see a repeated academic writing difficulties, for instance; Critical writing that was reported nine times by the participants which result 20.5% of the total number. Also vocabulary was reported again by the participants, 9.1% reported that they have academic vocabulary difficulties. Additionally, paraphrasing, quoting, and summarizing was again mentioned by the participants and it was resulted by 4.5% and also coherence and cohesion was also reported again by 2.3% of the total number.

In this questions we can also see that the participants mentioned other academic writing difficulties that was not mentioned in the previous figure ( Figure 4.7), The Algerian PhD candidates reported that they faced writing structure difficulties during their Thesis in the

UK. This was resulted by 22.7%. On the other hand, 15.9% of the participants said that they faced writing style difficulties. And 13.6% of the candidates think that L1 influence their academic writing. Additionally, 4.5% said that they face time management difficulties while writing academically, and also 4.5% said that they have clarity difficulties. Finally, 2.3% out of the total number shared that they struggle while trying to be original while writing their thesis.

According to the results of this question, a remarkable number of participants said that they struggle with the writing structure of their thesis. A structure is an important feature of academic writing. A well-structured text enables the reader to follow the argument and navigate the text. In academic writing a clear structure and a logical flow are imperative to a cohesive text. One of the things that show a weak structure in the research is wordiness, one of the participants shared that “Wordiness is one of the biggest issues I faced. I used too many words to express an idea that can be expressed in fewer words” another candidates also said that “Hedging and articulating my thoughts without sounding too direct and definitive. Determining the level of subjectivity I can have while being critical”. Alshabayeva from the Eurasian National University says “The academic writing structure includes not only grammar and lexical rules of creating sentences, but also structure of whole writing tasks, from beginning till the end. This item is responsible for such matters as using complete sentences, right dividing of writing up into paragraphs, correct selection of connecting words and so on”(Alshabayeva, 2012). In other words, the structure of academic writings is related to different items, as soon as you have a clear structure the readers will easily understand what you are trying to say in your research.

According to the research, the participants also mentioned that they faced writing style difficulties. Academic writing requires the use of an appropriate style that differs in significant ways from other forms of written communication. Using an academic writing

style is not just about choosing the right words; it is about setting out your ideas and arguments in a coherent, accessible and well-evidenced manner. Getting to grips with the style of academic writing is one of the important first steps in producing good written work at university. One of the students shared saying “Being very explicit and guiding the reader through every single paragraph. We are used to a culture of writing where the reader is the one who is supposed to make efforts to figure out the meanings, while the western culture of writer tasked the writer to make everything very explicit to the reader” which means that the style used in academic writing obliges the writer to make clear and understandable piece of writing for the readers.

According to the results, the Algerian PhD candidates also highlighted the influence of L1 in their academic writing, one of the participants explain his/her struggle with this issue saying “the problem is that I still think in Arabic and writing in English” another participants also shared “ I've been constantly criticised for "not following the academic writing of an Anglophone country in the EU" I still don't know what that means but this comment was often directed to other overseas students in my university, mainly from MENA or Eastern Asian countries” which means that most overseas students including Algerian students in the UK has an influence of his mother tongue on his academic writings. Barry mentioned on her research The impact of native Arabic on English as a second language that ;

“It has been observed since at least 1983 that native speakers of Arabic who write in English as a second language (ESL) experience influences of their native language (L1) on their target language (L2). In order to provide the most effective ESL writing instruction, it is necessary to understand these influences, and to differentiate between purely linguistic errors and cultural differences between native speakers of Arabic and native speakers of English.”(Barry, 2014) which means that L1 can affect the writings of Algerian learners if

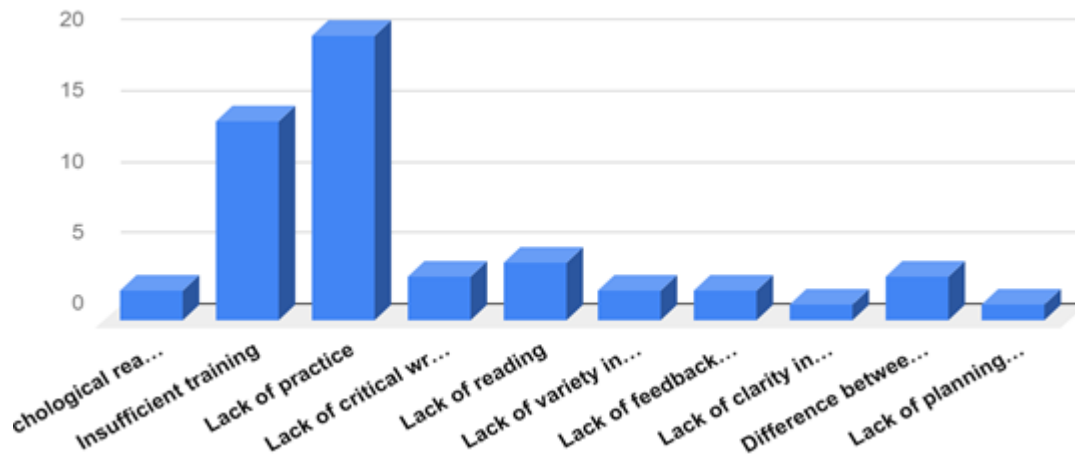
they are not trained enough in order to not just write in English but also thinking with the target Language.

Looking to the results, the participants also consider time management and clarity as an academic writing difficulty that they faced during their thesis in UK. a participant share that he has a problem finishing writing within the time limit. Alsalem and al(2017) reported that “Time management plays a vital role in improving student’s academic performance. Every student should have time management ability which includes setting goals and priorities” which means that time management is related skill to any academic activity, College students may become overwhelmed with feelings that there is not enough time to complete all their work adequately, and for that time student should acquire the skills of time management before starting any academic writing assignment. Clarity is also one of the difficulties that they Algerian PhD students face in the UK, The purpose for the concept of clarity in writing is to help students realize what they can do to make their own writing clear, concise, and ready to be read by others. The value of clarity in writing is more valuable than most students understand or realize. Many students are so quick to start writing that they neglect the task of planning and organizing.

#### **Item 9. The Reasons Behind Making Academic Writing Difficulties for the Algerian PhD Candidates in the UK**

In the questionnaire, the participants shared their comments and suggestions about the reasons behind facing academic writing difficulties. The following column chart show the statistics of what the Algerian PhD candidates think is the reason behind facing academic writing difficulties.





*Figure 4.9. The reasons behind facing academic writing difficulties*

According to the **figure 4.9** the most common reason for making academic writing difficulties is lack of practice, this result was reported with 20 times from the participants. Most of the participants who comments in this question did not feel satisfied with the amount of practice they had before and they think most of their academic writing classes were theoretical. A participants comments on this saying "The gap between finishing MA and starting PhD, if you don't write for a while you'll start to forget how to write. Writing is a skill that needs practice, practice makes perfect. Also, the writing module in MA did not involve collocations, the exam feedback did not focus on the writing points, just module content but still students need to be independent as well and learn how to write at home". It was proved by Russell (1991) who suggested including more writing in discipline specific courses because each discipline has its own terminologies of language use and style that can best be taught to students in the specific context of courses in the disciplines.

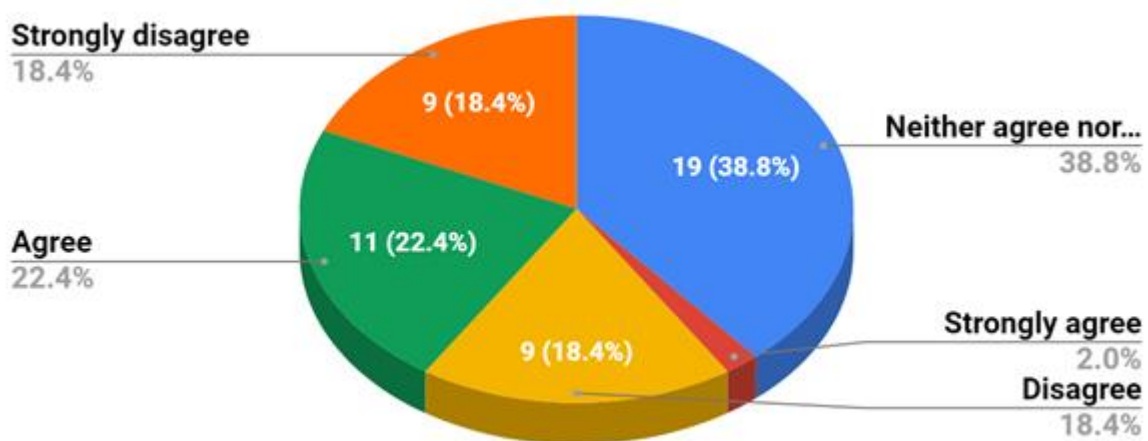
In the same question The participants reported that one of the reasons is Insufficient training, it was reported 14 times by the participants comments while one of the participants shared that "Algerian lecturers are not trained well enough to lecture about academic writing (especially in a foreign language using a western philosophical perspective). I wasn't aware of this until it was pointed out by my British supervisors" the teachers should employ multiple

teaching techniques in order to improve students' academic writing. This problem was mentioned by Ober (1992) who emphasized on including micro-writing activities that focus on the students' problems in writing and using activities that are simple and related to the students' academic disciplines.

The survey question also included a number of different answers that the participants consider as reasons for facing academic writing difficulties, for instance; Lack of reading was reported 4 times, difference between writing in L1 and English was reported 3 times, while Lack critical writing skills were mentioned 3 times. Additionally, the participants mentioned Lack of variety in writing assignments twice, and psychological reason that was mentioned in the comments twice, plus to the Lack of feedback on written input that was reported twice as well. Finally, both lack of clarity in writing and lack of planning skills were reported once by the Algerian PhD candidates in the UK.

**Item 10. The Learners Point About their Academic Writing Preparation**

In this survey, The Algerian PhD candidates in the UK answered whether they are the academic writing experience during MA degree in Algeria prepared them very well for the doctoral level in the United kingdom. The following graphs show the statistics of what the Algerian PhD candidates think about their preparation for an academic writing at doctoçral level in the UK.



***Figure 4.10 The learners point of view about academic writing preparation***

According to the statistics in **Figure 4.10**, a group between 38.8% shared that they neither agree nor disagree about if the experience they had in their MA degree in Algeria was enough for them for the academic writing in Doctoral level in the UK, but 22.4% of the participants agreed that they were well prepared during their MA degree in Algeria. Additionally, 18.4% of the candidates disagree and feel that they were not prepared very well, and also 18.4% strongly disagree about the fact that they were well prepared in their MA degree in Algeria. Finally only 2% shared that they strongly agree and they were completely prepared for the coming experience in the UK.

According to the answers of participants in the questionnaire, most of the reports shared were negative, these answers could be caused by the level of difficulty of the academic writing they faced during their PhD degree in the UK, we previously saw in figure 4.6 that approximately half of the students considered academic writing in the level of doctoral level in the UK difficult. Which could also answer the question; does the previous writing experience in Algeria affect your academic writings in the doctoral degree in the UK.

## **Conclusion**

The results found in this study can be summarized into two main points. The academic writing difficulties that face the Algerian PhD students the most during their academic career in the UK are: Academic language, Coherence & cohesion and Critical writing. which reject a part of the hypothesis that were given in the beginning that says the Algerian PhD candidates face Paraphrasing, quoting, and summarizing, plus to the lack of academic terminologies as academic writing difficulties. Additionally, this research also indicates that the Algerian PhD candidates in the UK think that they were not prepared enough for the academic writing in the doctoral degree, which prove the hypothesis mentioned before. and highlight the fact that the Algerian PhD candidates do believe that the previous writing experience they had in their MA degree affected negatively their academic writing during their PhD degree in the UK.

## **General Conclusion and Recommendation**

## **General Conclusion**

This study was conducted to make the Algerian academic community aware of the academic writing difficulties that face the Algerian PhD candidates in the UK. The main focus of this research was given to academic writing and its' difficulties, in order to enhance the academic writings within the Algerian academic community. Furthermore, we tried to show the impact of the previous education background on their PhD studies in the UK. Additionally, this research highlighted the reasons behind facing academic writing difficulties for the Algerian candidates in the UK.

This investigation was carried out at Mohammed Khider University of Biskra. Concerning the population, the participation were deliberately chosen for being educated in Algeria and they must be currently studying in one of United Kingdom's' universities, the participants' undergraduate educational background was mainly in the field of English language and literature. And The their postgraduate specialities varied from English literature, Applied linguistics, TEFL/ TESOL, Didactics, Language and Culture field. 49 Algerian PhD candidates in the UK were given a questionnaire designed in order to get insight about the academic writing difficulties that face the Algerian student in particular This field work aimed at whether confirming or rejecting the hypothesis that the academic writing difficulties that the Algerian PhD students face the most during their academic career in the UK are: Paraphrasing, quoting, and summarizing, plus to the lack of academic terminologies. plus to the hypothesis that says the Algerian PhD candidates in the UK think that they were not prepared enough for the academic writing on the doctoral degree.

The Findings revealed that the academic writing difficulties that Algerian PhD students face the most during their academic career in the UK are: Academic language, Coherence & cohesion and Critical writing. In addition to that, the participants reported writing structure

and writing style within their comments on the survey. Moreover, The Results show that the Algerian PhD candidates in the UK think that they were not prepared enough for the academic writing in the doctoral degree, and they do believe that the previous writing experience they had in their MA degree affected negatively their academic writing during their PhD degree in the UK.

To conclude, we can say that the method used in this research was a modest attempt to deal with such a topic, but because we have been limited by many factors such as time and the busy schedule of the Algerian doctoral candidates, an online survey was the only tool used to connect the participants, and it was the ultimate way to reach some results.

### **Recommendation**

On the basis of the results of analyzing the gathered data the researcher suggest the following recommendations. The findings of the current study may help the syllabus developers to improve it and give more time for academic writing.

The teacher of academic writing should provide more time for the learners in order to practice academic writing rather than having theoretical classes.

The teacher should focus on the academic writing difficulties which faces the Algerian learners in particular

In order to learn Academic language, the learner should practice by writing assignments by themselves.

Academic writing covers the essential skills to be successful at degree level study with additional emphasis on wider skills for continuing personal and professional development. In addition to that, future work could include researching Algerian students in other English speaking universities such as American or Austrlian universities and examining their experience. It would be interesting to compare the results of this study about Algerian learners with other studies in the future, which could find the similarities and differences

among Algerian learners and other international students. With a better understanding of the challenges academics would be better able to help Algerian students with their academic writing. Overall, all of this should lead to more successful students.



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## Appendices

**Appendix 1:** Students' Questionnaire.....

## Questionnaire

\*Required

### Introduction

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Dear participant,

This questionnaire is part of a study about the perceived academic writing difficulties faced by Algerian EFL students studying in the UK.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. The data you provide will be securely stored and you will not be identified as an individual in the final research.

For further information or inquiries about the study, please get in touch with the researcher through the following email address: [amratebadreddine1@gmail.com](mailto:amratebadreddine1@gmail.com)

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Yours sincerely,

Badreddine Amrate

English Department/ University of Biskra

MA in TEFL and Applied Linguistics

### Section one: Profile information

1. Age \*

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2. Gender \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Female

Male

3. IELTS overall score: \*

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4. IELTS writing score: \*

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5. Time already spent in the United kingdom: \*

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**6. Educational background (High school specialty) \****Mark only one oval.*

- Literature and philosophy
- Foreign languages
- Natural sciences
- Management and economy
- Mathematics

**7. Postgraduate major: \****Mark only one oval.*

- English literature
- Applied linguistics
- TEFL/ TESOL
- Didactics

**Section Two: Academic writing****8. In general, you find writing assignments in English: \****Mark only one oval.*

- Very easy
- Easy
- Neither difficult nor easy
- Difficult
- Very difficult

**9. To what extent did you find academic writing difficult during your MA degree in Algeria? \****Mark only one oval.*

- Very easy
- Easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Difficult
- Very difficult

**10. How many sessions of academic writing (writing modules) per-week did you have during your MA degree in Algeria? \****Mark only one oval.*

- One session
- Two sessions
- Three sessions
- Four sessions
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

11. **Do you think you had enough writing assignments during your MA degree in Algeria? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes  
 Maybe  
 No

12. **And Why? \***

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13. **How often were you asked to do the following assignments during MA degree in Algeria? \***

*Mark only one oval per row.*

	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Essay	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research paper/ article	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dissertation/ thesis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technical report	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Book/ book chapter/ article reviews	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Section three: Academic writing difficulties

14. **To what extent did you find academic writing difficult while doing your PhD degree in the UK? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Extremely easy  
 Easy  
 Neither easy nor difficult  
 Difficult  
 Extremely difficult

15. **What kind of academic writing difficulties did you face while doing your PhD thesis? \***

*Mark only one oval per row.*

	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Paraphrasing, quoting, and summarizing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Referencing & citations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academic language	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coherence & cohesion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Critical writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Navigating the literature (books/ articles)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vocabulary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grammatical accuracy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The nature of the topic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. What other academic writing difficulties did you face while doing your PhD thesis? \*

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17. What do you think are the reasons behind facing such difficulties in academic writing? \*

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18. The academic writing experience during my MA degree in Algeria prepared me very well for academic writing at a doctoral level in the UK \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



## Résumé

La présente étude a examiné les difficultés d'écriture académique, rencontrées par les candidats algériens au doctorat lors de leur thèse doctorale au Royaume-Uni. À cet effet, un questionnaire a été posé et les réponses ont été reçues et discutées. Ces données d'étude ont été collectées via une formule en ligne (Google Form). L'approche adoptée lors de cette étude s'inscrit dans le cadre d'une méthode mixte, menée auprès de 49 doctorants algériens au Royaume-Uni / (42) femmes - (7) hommes. Les critères de participation sont les suivants: les étudiants doivent avoir été scolarisés en Algérie et être actuellement inscrits dans une des universités du Royaume-Uni. Bien que la plupart des étudiants aient appris la rédaction académique dans un module universitaire au moins dans leur maîtrise, les résultats de cette étude ont montré qu'ils étaient toujours confrontés à divers problèmes face à l'écriture académique. Les données ont révélé que les problèmes d'écriture universitaire auxquels sont confrontés les doctorants algériens au Royaume-Uni sont la langue académique, la cohérence, la cohésion et l'écriture critique. En outre, les candidats au doctorat algériens au Royaume-Uni pensent qu'ils n'étaient pas suffisamment préparés pour des publications académiques de doctorat. Sur la base de ces résultats, les hypothèses n'ont pas toutes été confirmées.