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Faculty of Letters and Languages
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# INVESTIGATING THE IMPORTANCE OF CRITICAL THINKING IN ENHANCING EFL STUDENTS' ACDEMIC WRITING
# A Case of Master One Students of English at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra

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# Dedication

*In the name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful*

*All Praise is due to Allah alone, the Sustainer of the entire world*

*I dedicate this work to:*

*My beloved mother, and my dear father*

*My brothers and my sisters*

*My nephew, niece and their mother*

*My friends*

*To all who helped and encouraged me*

*My deepest gratitude for their support and encouragement.*

## Acknowledgements

Before all, my sincere praise to **Allah** the almighty for giving me strength and patience to accomplish this humble work.

Special thanks and sincere gratitude would go to my dear supervisor **Dr. TURQUI Barkat** for his valuable guidance, assistance, and patience.

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Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the teachers and students who participated in this research study.

## Abstract

Critical thinking is generally deemed to be one of the central requirements and desired outcomes in students' academic papers. Thus, learners' writing products are generally evaluated based on their ability and success to manipulate and analyze information effectively. Apparently, the majority of EFL students at Mohamed Khider University come up with poor academic papers. This poorness is due to the difficulties that have not overcome yet. Students face difficulties in terms of organization and style, lack of sources and inability to understand, evaluate and analyze others' ideas. Hence, this study is an attempt to investigate the importance and the usefulness of higher order critical thinking for EFL students to improve their academic writing. In this respect, we hypothesize that if EFL students become good critical thinkers, their academic writing would be improved. Moreover, to achieve the main purpose of this study, a qualitative approach was adopted and a case study was used as a strategy for this research work. Besides, in order to collect data for this descriptive study, two questionnaires have been used for both fifty (50) Master One students and twelve (12) teachers. After the analysis and discussion of the collected data, the obtained results revealed that possessing critical thinking skills helps students to improve their academic papers. Therefore, we can conclude that the previously stated hypothesis was confirmed and the findings were proved.

**Key words:** Critical thinking, academic writing, skills, EFL students

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# List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

**EFL: English as a Foreign Language**

**LMD: License Master Doctorate**

**Q: Question**

**&: and**

**S/he: She or He**

**%: Percent**

## General Introduction

# General Introduction

Recently critical thinking has become an essential part of successful study in Foreign Language Teaching at university level. In this respect most students are required to make some research assignments, which require academic writing. This implies that they have to be able to express their ideas in a critical way. As critical writing is a hard task for students, it is necessary for them to learn the skills of critical thinking. These skills are in the form a cognitive activity which demands autonomy and open-mindedness. It is important in the sense that it helps learners to verify and construct reasoned arguments in a clear and well structured manner. Moreover, academic writing is not only a matter of collecting information about a topic and referencing the sources. In fact, it is about being able to analyze, evaluate and interpret the ideas of others in one's own words. With regard to the importance of this skill, this study will be conducted to investigate the importance of critical thinking in enhancing EFL learners' academic writing.

## 1. Statement of the Problem

Writing Academic English is one of the challenging tasks that EFL learners at Mohamed Khider University are supposed to come up with during their academic studies. Yet, there is a clear dissatisfaction from teachers about students' written production. Indeed, students either they lack the appropriate vocabulary or are unable to generate and evaluate information. As thinking is a major step in the writing process, it is crucial to raise awareness among EFL learners about the importance of critical thinking. Therefore, the present study mainly highlights the importance of critical thinking in enhancing EFL students' academic writing.

**2. Significance of the Study**

This research work aims to contribute in the development of students' academic writing through the application of critical thinking skills. It seeks also to highlight the influence of critical thinking in improving learners' writing proficiency and accuracy. A further contribution of this research work is that students would be able to express and justify their thoughts and ideas through reasoned arguments. In addition, the study attempts to provide a clear understanding of what is academic writing, along with  the stages that are included in writing composition.

**3. Objectives of the Study**

The overall aim of this study is to raise awareness about the importance of critical thinking in the improvement of students' academic writing. In this respect, tow subordinate objectives are proposed to achieve the aforementioned aim:

a. Identification of the cognitive abilities or skills in order to assist students to understand, evaluate and check the accuracy of information.

b. Exploration of the writing process and the major difficulties in writing academically.

**4. Research Questions**

This research work aims to investigate the following questions:

1. How can critical thinking enhance learners' academic writing?

 2. What are the difficulties that EFL students face when writing their academic papers?

3. How can EFL students improve their academic writing?

**5. Research Hypothesis**

Based on the research questions, we hypothesize that EFL students' academic writing would be improved if they become good critical thinkers in foreign language proficiency.

## 6. Research Methodology

### 6.1 Research Method

As it has been stated before, this study is conducted to investigate the importance of critical thinking in enhancing EFL students' academic writing. It seeks also to identify the skills which assist students to understand, analyze and evaluate information, as well as the challenges faced by students when writing academically. Thus, a qualitative research approach was adopted. Accordingly, we chose a descriptive method because it serves our main purpose which is to describe the results and it is the suitable method in the field of education.

### 6.2 Data Gathering Tools

In order to achieve the main objective of this study and validate our hypothesis, two questionnaires were used as collection methods. One was distributed to students and another one to teachers.

### 6.3 Population and Sample

The target population of this study is Master One (Science of the Language) EFL students at Mohamed Khider University. Because at this level, learners are supposed to come up with essays and research papers written in academic form. From a population of 194 students, a sample of fifty (50) students was selected to conduct this research study.

## 7. Structure of the Study

The current study consists mainly of a theoretical part and practical one. The theoretical part consists of two chapters. The first chapter provides detailed information about critical thinking, including its definition, importance and skills. In addition, it will analyze some activities that may help students to improve their critical thinking. The second chapter deals with academic writing. It provides definitions, features of academic

writing and its approaches. Moreover, it puts forwards the three methods for acknowledging sources. The third chapter will be devoted to the fieldwork and data analysis. It will be concerned with the description and analysis of students' and teachers' questionnaires.

# Chapter One: An Overview on Critical Thinking

# Chapter One: An Overview on Critical Thinking

**Introduction**

This chapter provides a broad and general overview about the issue of critical thinking, the critical thinking history or movement and its definitions. The literature review also highlights the importance of critical thinking and illustrates the main basics that build this notion: claims, issues and arguments. Then, it reviews the characteristics that distinguish good critical thinkers from other people. Afterwards, we shed the light on the core skills that are involved in this cognitive activity, namely interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation, and self-regulation.

The chapter then reviews the two approaches that are related to critical thinking. In this respect, Bloom's Taxonomy is examined since it plays a great role in understanding the concept of critical thinking. In addition, we analyze Metacognition Theory along with the way we assess critical thinking. Besides, we study the relationship between critical thinking and the reading and writing skills. Finally, the chapter ends with some activities that may help students improve their critical thinking.

**1.1 Historical Background of Critical Thinking**

Critical thinking is not a new concept; in fact, its deep roots came from ancient philosophers. Paul, Elder, and Bartell (1997, p. 4) state that critical thinking was first introduced by the Greek philosopher Socrates, who 2500 years ago, utilized "The Method of Probing Questioning", in which he established the fact that a person should ask deep questions before accepting ideas blindly. In addition to Socrates, philosophers such as Plato and Aristotale tackle also the issue of critical thinking; but the focus of those philosophers was not on critical thinking in the classroom as Sternberg (1986) stated:

"Philosophers have focused their attention not so much upon the requirements of critical thinking in the classroom, but upon the requirements of formal logical systems."(p. 4).

After the philosophers, psychological theorists in their turn base their works about critical thinking on the cognitive psychological development. Halpern (as cited in Belhafsi, 2017, p.34) indicates that psychologists view critical thinking as "thinking that is purposeful, reasoned, and goal directed that involves solving problems, formulating inferences, and making decisions". Then, educators were also involved especially John Dewey who is considered as the modern-day founder of critical thinking. Dewey who was an educator, philosopher and psychologist was the first one who highlighted the importance of critical thinking in the field of education. Moreover, educators such as Bloom, Gagne, Perkins, and Renzulli focus directly on the skills needed by children in the classroom for problem solving, decision making, and concept learning (Sternberg, 1986).

## 1.2 Definitions of Critical thinking

Within the last decades, critical thinking has become a much discussed concept, that is why we find various views and definitions of this issue. Critical thinking was first introduced by John Dewey (1910). He defines critical thinking as "reflective thought" and he states that "reflection involves not simply a sequence of ideas, but a consequence—a consecutive ordering in such a way that each determines the next as its proper outcome, while each outcome in turn leans back on its predecessors" (p. 2-3). Thus, Dewey sees that reflective thought is a chain of thoughts that aims at a conclusion.

Ennis (1984) (as cited in Fulton, 1989, p. 4) proposes that "critical thinking is reflective and reasonable thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do". In this definition Ennis highlights the importance of reasoning and reflection in relation to the beliefs and actions that we seek to achieve. Moreover, Cottrell (2005) points out that critical thinking is a cognitive activity. She believes that, someone thinking critically is the

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one who makes use of the mental abilities or skills such as attention, selection and judgment.

In his book, Moon (2008) portrays critical thinking as "the ability to consider a range of information derived from many different sources, to process this information in a creative and logical manner, challenging it, analysing it and arriving at considered conclusions which can be defended and justified" (p. 21). In other words, critical thinking is a process of actively understanding, analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating the gathered information. Another definition has been proposed by both Moore and Barker (2011). They agree that critical thinking is the careful use of reasoning to justify the validity of claims.

Halpern (2014, p. 6) provides a simple definition that captures the main concepts of critical thinking. He defines it as:

> Critical thinking is the use of those cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of the desirable outcome. It is used to describe thinking that is purposeful, reasoned, and goal directed−the kind of thinking involved in solving problems, formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions, when the thinker is using skills that are thoughtful and effective for the particular context and type of thinking task.

Therefore, critical thinking is more than thinking about your own thinking or making judgments, it refers to the application of certain skills and strategies in order to reach the desired conclusions.

To sum up, each of these researchers give his definition of the notion of critical thinking. From these definitions we can conclude that critical thinking is a cognitive process that enables people to analyze, synthesize and evaluate assumptions and reach conclusions.

## 1.3 Importance of Critical Thinking

The ability to think critically is one of the important and vital needs for the individuals of the 21$^{st}$ century, because the world is becoming more technical, complex and dangerous as Paul and Elder (2007) states "Critical thinking is becoming increasingly important due

to four trends: accelerating change, intensifying complexity, escalating interdependence, and increasing danger" (p.10). Similarly, Halpern (2003, p. 5) point out that "It is difficult to imagine any area where the ability to think clearly is not needed". Therefore, critical thinking is not restricted to a particular area or subject; in fact, it is needed in any aspect of our lives and in any situation that calls for a reaction.

The abovementioned information is a wider description of the importance of critical thinking. However, specifying it to the field of education, critical thinking is considered to be a central and fundamental issue in higher education since it is involved in many activities such as research activity. Critical thinking enables students as readers to assess, analyze, and evaluate ideas. It also facilitates the way the students think and work as writers, in other words, critical thinking helps students to be more accurate and specific in noting what is relevant and what is not (The Open University,2008).

Moreover, Hale (as cited in Barker, 2011, p. 15) notes that when we back to the works of philosophers such as Socrates we find that in their writings they have "developed a concept of education which stressed the importance of thought, inquiry, and intellectual independence which has been embedded into the learning process. To discuss critical thinking is to discuss teaching and learning". So, critical thinking is a key element in both teaching and learning.

Critical thinking is a skill which is valuable at all levels of our thinking. Hence, the development of this skill will allow individuals to check their own assumptions and evaluate arguments. In addition, it enables them to analyze information and solve problems.

### 1.4 Basics of Critical Thinking

People who seek to be good critical thinkers need to know the basics of critical thinking. Moor and Parker (2009) introduce three basic building blocks of critical thinking which are claims, issues, and arguments.

### 1.4.1 Claims

A claim is defined as a declarative sentence used in such a way that is either true or false. Both Moor and Parker view it as the things we say orally or written to convey information and express opinions or beliefs. They state that "many claims can and should be given a close look and evaluation" (p.6). In other words, we need to check whether the claim is justified or not and subsequently to determine if it is true or false.

### 1.4.2 Issues

Issues are regarded as the heart of critical thinking. According to Moor and Parker the issue refers to the questions that we ask to determine the truth or falsity of the claim. They add that "Claims, construed as issues and supported (or not) by arguments, are the central focus of critical thinking" (ibid). Thus, claims and issues are two concepts which complete each other.

### 1.4.3 Arguments

Arguments are used in critical thinking to prove or deny the truth or falsity of the claim. Moor and parker (2009, p. 10) point out that "We produce an **argument** when we give a reason for thinking that a claim is true". That is to say, the word "argument" refers to an attempt to persuade someone that one position is more acceptable than another or one idea is true than another. In addition, Moor and Parker agree that an argument consists of two parts: the premises which refer to a collection of claims that strive to provide a reason for believing that the other part which is the conclusion is true. Therefore, the conclusion is the main purpose of the argument which will be supported by a reason.

## 1.5 Characteristics of Critical thinkers

Many students think that possessing critical thinking skills is quite enough to be a good critical thinker. Indeed, the possession and application of critical thinking skills have a great impact in developing good critical thinkers; but one should be also characterized by certain qualities and behaviors as Buskist and Irones (2008, p.50-51) note:

> After all, critical thinkers do not have "CT" tattooed on their foreheads, they do not wear t-shirts that announce "I'm Critical Thinker," and they generally do not provide physical demonstrations of their critical thinking prowess at parties and socials. However, critical thinkers do demonstrate a variety of behaviors and skills that are readily apparent in situations requiring problem solving.

Besides, Halpern (1998) suggests some characteristics that critical thinkers should have:

- A willingness to engage in and persist at a complex task.

- Habitual use of plans and the suppression of impulsive activity.

- Flexibility or open-mindedness.

- Willingness to abandon nonproductive strategies in an attempt to self-correct.

- An awareness of the social realities that need to be overcome.

Furthermore, according to Vardi (2015) someone who wants to be a critical thinker should first be proactive in both behaviors and thought. In other words, he or she should act to prevent problems before they happen. Buikist and Irones (2008, p51) describe the major characteristics of critical thinkers that have been gathered from the literature of Bensley, 1998; Diestler, 2001; Fisher, 2001; Halpern, 2003 and Levy, 1997. The literature notes that:

> critical thinkers can accurately explain their decisions; consider alternative explanations for any state of affairs; curb their emotional reactions to others' arguments; determine the truth or falsity of assumptions; develop and present reasoned and persuasive arguments; distinguish between primary and secondary sources of information; distinguish credible (e.g., APA) from non credible sources of information; distinguish evidence from opinion, common sense, anecdotes, and appeals to authority; distinguish opinion from fact; draw inferences; formulate and ask appropriate questions; gather data from multiple sources relevant to a problem to be solved or a decision to be made; identify their preconceptions about important

issues; and understand the use and abuses of mathematical and statistical information in decision making.

All these qualities build the personality of good critical thinkers who are capable of negotiating and solving problems that they may face in different fields of their everyday life.

## 1.6 Critical Thinking Skills

Critical thinking does not mean making one think, but rather it is a task which demands a number of skills that enable an individual to develop an awareness and ability to make correct decisions independently. Researchers have different views about the skills related to critical thinking; however, many of them agree on six skills that are: interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation, and self-regulation. Each of these skills contains a number of sub- skills as Facione (1990, p.15) states in the table below:

| CONSENSUS LIST OF CRITICAL THINKING |
| :--- |
| CONSENSUS LIST OF CRITICAL THINKING COGNITIVE  SKILLS AND SUB-SKILLS |
| 1.Interpretation <br><br> •      Categorization <br> •      Decoding Significance <br> •      Clarifying Meaning |
| 2. Analysis <br><br> •      Examining Ideas <br> •      Identifying Arguments <br> •      Analyzing Arguments |
| 3. Evaluation <br><br> •      Assessing Claims <br> •      Assessing Arguments |
| 4. Inference <br><br> •      Querying Evidence <br> •      Conjecturing Alternatives <br> •      Drawing Conclusions |
| 5. Explanation <br><br> •      Stating results <br> •      Justifying Procedures <br> •      Presenting Arguments |
| 6. Self-Regulation <br><br> •      Self-examination <br> •      Self-correction |

**Table 1.1 Consensus List of Critical Thinking Cognitive Skills and     Sub-skills (Facione, 1990)**

### 1.6.1 Interpretation

Interpretation refers to the comprehension of what is said or written. Facione (1990) writes that interpretation is "to comprehend and express the meaning or significance of a wide variety of experiences, situations, data, events, judgments, conventions, beliefs, rules, procedures or criteria" (p.16). Thus, interpretation is necessary to be able to express meanings of something and this will be influenced by the individual's prior knowledge and personal experiences. Interpretation includes the sub-skills of categorization, decoding significance, and clarifying meaning.

➢ **Categorization:** It is to organize, describe, and classify information, experiences and events; so that, a person can build a comprehensible meaning of a given task or situation.

➢ **Decoding Significance:** To spot and describe a person's intentions, motives, views, and purposes expressed in a particular way such as gestures, signs, and drawings.

➢ **Clarifying Meaning:** To restate what a person said in different words to remove confusion, ambiguity and make the meaning explicit.

### 1.6.2 Analysis

In order to be a good critical thinker one has to be able to identify both the actual relationship between statements and the intended relationship. This skill includes three sub-skills namely examining ideas, detecting, and analyzing arguments.

➢ **Examining Ideas**: It refers to a detailed examination of the elements an individual wants to analyze.

➢ **Detecting Arguments:** It means to examine if a claim or an expression is supported with or against a point view, claim or an argument.

➢ **Analyzing Arguments:** It is the examination of how a claim is able to achieve a support or opposition.

**1.6.3 Evaluation**

Once an individual has interpreted and analyzed exactly what he is asked to do, then he needs to evaluate whether or not the arguments he uses to prove a claim or point of view are valid or not. In this respect, Facione (1990, p. 18) notes that evaluation refers to the assessment of "the credibility of statements or other representations which are accounts or descriptions of a person's perception, experience, situation, judgment, belief, or opinion". Evaluation also includes two sub-skills:

➢ **Assessing Claims:** It refers to the assessment of degree of credibility of a given belief or opinion. In other words, it is to recognize the factors that make an individual credible in a given opinion or view.

➢ **Assessing Arguments:** It is to determine the strength or weakness of arguments. That is to say to judge if the evidence supports the conclusion being drawn or not.

**1.6.4 Inference**

According to Facione (1990, p. 19) inference means:

> To identify and secure elements needed to draw reasonable conclusions; to form conjectures and hypotheses; to consider relevant information and to educe the consequences flowing from data, statements, principles, evidence, judgments, beliefs, opinions, concepts, descriptions, questions, or other forms of representation.

In other words, when we inference we try to draw conclusions based on the arguments used or what are the results of a particular assumption or hypothesis. As sub-skills of inference, Facione lists querying evidence, conjecturing alternatives, and drawing conclusions.

➢ **Querying Evidence:** The attempt to gather information and develop arguments that might support one's evidence.

➢ **Conjecturing Arguments:** It is to develop a set of options, presuppositions, or hypothesis for resolving a problem or possible consequences of a particular decision.

➤ **Drawing Conclusions:** To deduce which conclusion is the most strongly and supported by evidence or which one should be rejected from several possible conclusions.

**1.6.5 Explanation**

Being able to express one's reasoning clearly and coherently is a key to be a good critical thinker. It is important for an individual to be skillful at making his arguments comprehensible and present reasons for the decisions or choices he has made (Facione, 1990). There are three sub-skills under explanation.

➤ **Stating Results:** To state the results of one's reasoning activities, so as to analyze, evaluate, infer from, or monitor those results.

➤ **Justifying Procedures:** It is to state the evidential, conceptual, and methodological steps that one has followed when interpreting, analyzing, and evaluating a piece of literature.

➤ **Presenting Arguments:** It refers to identifying and expressing the reasons for accepting or refuting claims.

**1.6.6 Self-Regulation**

Facione (1990) defines self-regulation to mean "self-consciously to monitor one's cognitive activities, the elements used in those activities, and the results educed, particularly by applying skills in analysis and evaluation to one's own inferential judgments with a view toward questioning, confirming, validating" (p.22). Self-regulation means to be aware how personal experiences and biases may influence any conclusion that an individual draws from written or spoken data. The two sub-skills here are self-examination and self-correction.

➤ **Self-Examination:** To assess and judge one's reasoning and verify the results produced and the correct application of the cognitive skills. It is also a way to detect one's errors and deficiencies in one's knowledge.

➢ **Self-Correction:** As self-examination reveals deficiencies and errors, self-correction means to develop reasonable procedures to remedy those deficiencies and correct the mistakes.

## 1.7 Critical Thinking Approaches

Many researchers agree that both Bloom's Taxonomy and metacognition have a great role in understanding the issue of critical thinking, and distinguishing it from other concepts.

## 1.7.1 Bloom's Taxonomy

Blooms taxonomy is an educational proposal which has been developed by Benjamin Bloom with some of his colleagues. According to Brown (as cited in Settouf, 2016, p. 20) Blooms Taxonomy is important to improve critical thinking which directs students "to establish clarity and accuracy, assess the relevance and demonstrate the ability to think in depth". Therefore, Bloom's taxonomy is beneficial for learners because it guides the students to high order of thinking through certain steps.

Knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation are the six levels of thinking which have been proposed by Bloom in 1956. Sternberg (1986, p. 10) explains the six levels as follow:

> At the lowest level is knowledge. The next level if comprehension, which requires one to go beyond knowledge in that one must understand what one comes to know. At the next level is application, which is a level higher yet in that the individual must also be able to apply what he or she has comprehended. A level higher up is analysis, which requires one critically to appraise what one comprehends and applies. Still higher is synthesis, which requires putting together in a  some what creative way the knowledge one has analyzed in various domains. At the highest level is evaluation, which is a broad and critical appraisal of the knowledge one has analyzed and synthesized.

Consequently, we can notice that the six levels complete each other, in other words, mastering of a given level needs the mastery of the previous one.

Krathwole (as cited in Settouf, 2016, p. 20) has revised the original taxonomy of Bloom which has been published in 1956. Krathwole established the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy in 2001.
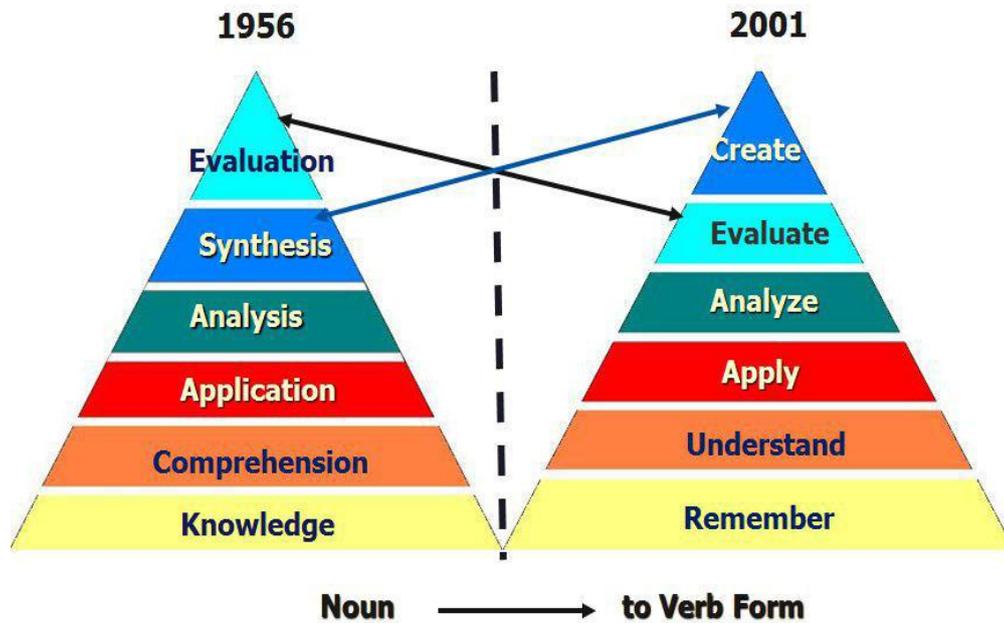


**Figure1.1 Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Krathwole, 2002)**

Krathwole did not make a huge change, indeed there is a slight change between the original and the revised taxonomy. The change occurs in the last two categories where synthesis is replaced by creativity. The revised Bloom's Taxonomy focuses more on creativity which is essential in the act of thinking.

### 1.7.2 Metacognition

Metacognition is another major approach which is related to critical thinking in addition to Bloom's Taxonomy. Although the later was beneficial, researchers such as Halpern (2014) points out the importance of metacognition to develop the student's critical thinking even more. Halpern (2014, p. 27) states that metacognition refers to "our knowledge of what we know (or what we know about what we know) and the use of this

knowledge to direct further learning activities". In other words, metacognition refers to the individual's awareness of his own knowledge and how to use that knowledge.

Furthermore, Flavell (as cited in Settouf, 2016, p. 21) asserts that metacognition is "thinking about thinking". Since, critical thinking is also defined as a cognitive activity which demands cognitive skills, it is clear that there is a strong relationship between metacognition and critical thinking because both are cognitive processes and both seek to improve thinking. Accordingly, metacognition is considered as a supporting point to critical thinking as it assists individuals to achieve higher thinking.

## 1.8 Assessment of Critical thinking

A proper assessment of students' critical thinking skills must be done, in order to insure if there is an improvement or not. If students know their strengths and weaknesses, their attempts to improve can be better focused. Facione (1990) insists that critical thinking assessment should be made explicit to reinforce its worth. He proposes four strategies that can assist teachers to assess their students appropriately. These strategies are: content validity, construct validity, reliability, and fairness.

➢ **Content Validity:** students or individuals are not evaluated to insure if their answers are correct or not. However, they are evaluated to insure that their correct answers to a particular task or question are not a matter of memorization.

➢ **Construct Validity:** In construct validity students are assessed according to their answers. If they answer correctly this means that they are good critical thinkers, whereas if they do not, this means that they have weaknesses in critical thinking.

➢ **Reliability:** Usually good critical thinkers perform better than the weak ones. This strategy is stated to insure that idea. Facione (1990, p. 34) notes that "at this time, due caution should be exercised regarding how to interpret technical measures of test-form reliability in the case of paper and pencil CT assessment instruments".

> **Fairness:** Facione asserts that students should not be evaluated according to their age, gender, or social status. In fact, they should be assessed on equal basis such as background knowledge.

## 1.9 Reading and Writing Critically

Reading and writing are two different skills that are clearly related to critical thinking. Reading involves the input of information from text sources while writing deals with the output of information and ideas via written text. Moreover, it is important to apply critical thinking skills when reading and writing in order to avoid some problems that may influence the students' piece of work.

### 1.9.1 Reading Critically

Many students view critical reading as to read and take notes, and then apply critical thinking to that notes; indeed, note taking is a stage in critical reading. Cottrell (2005, p. 147) indicates that:

> Critical reading requires you to focus your attention much more closely on certain parts of a written text, holding other information in mind. As it involves analysis, reflection, evaluation and making judgements, it usually involves slower reading than that used for recreational reading or for gaining general background information.

Consequently, critical reading is a task which requires deeper reading and concentration in the text to detect the author's position; that is to say what he wants the reader to do is it to think, accept, or believe.

### 1.9.2 Writing Critically

Students do not only need to read critically, but they must also be able to express their ideas in a critical way. Dunn, Holonen, and Smith (2008) view writing simply as "another form of critical thinking, perhaps a higher form because most writers in psychology –both students and professionals– write with the goal of sharing their ideas with others". Thus, improving students' critical thinking skills assists them to develop their writing skill.

Cottrell (2005) points out the characteristics of critical writing among them the content. She states that "In critical writing, most of the text is dedicated to presenting a case through providing reasons, using relevant evidence, comparing and evaluating alternative arguments, weighing up conflicting evidence, and forming judgements on the basis of the evidence". Simply, critical writing is a process where critical thinking skills are needed to avoid such problems that students may encounter when writing a piece of work.

## 1.10 Activities to Promote Critical Thinking

In order to develop their critical thinking skills students need to be exposed to some activities. Researchers and educators have identified a number of activities to improve critical thinking. Questioning, classroom discussion and debates, and written assignments are examples of those activities.

➢ **Questioning:** This strategy is considered to be the core of critical thinking. The aim of this activity is to develop the students' ability to ask critical questions and search for answers. Open questions are more effective than close questions, because open questions motivate the students to use critical thinking skills such as interpretation and analysis. (Hughes, 2014)

Vallis (2010, p. 36) asserts that we have to make sure that the questions we ask should follow the eight critical question guidelines which are:

- The question is not a question that can be answered by "yes" or "no".
- The question does not have the word "should," nor is it phrased as a "should" question.
- The question may be one around which you have some ideas, but it is not a question to which you already have the answer.
- The question is not a question that someone else has already answered in the same way, or that requires extensive secondary sources, or an advanced degree, to answer.
- The question does not require you to generalize groups of people, as in "Men like sports".
- The question does not require you to "speak for others." A good way to check this is to ask yourself if the only reasonable answer is: "It depends upon whom you ask".
- The question should be as specific as you can make it, because general questions such as "What is the meaning of life?" would probably not be something you could answer comprehensively within the length of an essay.

- The question should not require you to imagine future events.

➢ **Classroom Discussion and Debates:** In this activity students are exposed to develop negotiations. Each student is exposed to express and defend his or her point of view. Classroom discussion and debates help students to use the language appropriately and express opinion, agreeing, or disagreeing. (Walker, 2003)

➢ **Written Assignments:** Involving students in written assignments can expand their critical thinking. Oermann (as cited in Walker, 2003) assures that "assignments for the purpose of promoting thought should be short (not long term papers) and focus on the aspect of thinking"; so that students will not be bored.

**Conclusion**

Critical thinking skill is one of the central requirements for the individuals' life especially in the field of education. In this chapter we have discussed critical thinking from different aspects. To raise the students' awareness about the importance of critical thinking, we have pointed out some parameters that might be beneficial for them. We have concluded the chapter by some activities that both teachers and students can follow to promote not just critical thinking but also other skills such as reading and writing. Since critical thinking is based on interpretation, analysis and evaluation, it would be useful if students in higher education apply it when they   write their academic papers.

# Chapter Two: A Brief Overview about Academic Writing

# Chapter Two: A Brief Overview about Academic Writing

## Introduction

Academic writing is considered as an important issue that EFL learners need to master, because it is one of the main ways which students are assessed on at university. Since academic writing is different from the other genres of writing, in this chapter we try to address the major theoretical concepts of academic writing. Initially, the chapter provides the definitions of the term academic writing. Then, we try to make a distinction between academic writing and the other genres of writing where we state the major differences between them. Furthermore, the chapter displays the main purposes or reasons that incite writers to write academically.

Additionally, this chapter presents the features that should be available in any academic paper. Moreover, we shed light on the process of academic writing that any student should follow when s/he prepares an academic paper. The approaches of writing are also issues that will be tackled in this chapter. Finally, the chapter discusses the methods that should be used when writing academic papers to acknowledge sources.

## 2.1 Definition of Academic Writing

Writing is one of the most important skills that EFL students need to develop. Many researchers agree that writing is a difficult task even for native students, because it requires many mechanisms as Hilton and Hyder (1992, p. 7) state:

> Writing requires greater precision and care speech, as it is a more formal activity producing permanent record. When we speak we gauge our listeners' response and clarify any points, which haven't been comprehended. As no such interaction takes place in a piece of writing, our communication skills have to be unambiguous.

Academic writing is a kind of writing that follows certain conventions of structure, style, referencing and content which makes it different from creative personal and other

genres of writing. Academic writing is characterized by being formal and oriented to a specific type of audience (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). In this respect, Hogue (2008, p. 2) also points out that "Academic writing requires certain skills. These skills include sentence structure (how to arrange words in a sentence), organization (how to arrange ideas in a paragraph), and, of course, grammar and punctuation."

Researchers such as Baily (2015), Hogue and Oshima (2007) agree that academic writing is designed for or used by students who are studying at university, because they are supposed to write different forms of assignments during their academic studies. Writing essays, research papers, dissertations and articles are examples of the assignments where students have to write academically. These assignments give the students the opportunity to develop central skills such as analyzing texts and processing information, in other words, the students will be trained to investigate an issue and present their position based on evidence ( Meddour & Hassina, 2016).

Furthermore, according to Gillett, Hammond and Martalla (2009, p. xix) "Academic writing is a social practice. This means that you always write with a readership in mind and you always write with a purpose". Hence, in academic writing there is always a reason behind writing. Academic writers be it a student, teacher or whoever  writes for a purpose, it can be for explaining or persuading the audience of a particular point of view taking into consideration different arguments. That is to say, to prove his or her position through academic and logical arguments.

## 2.2 Difference between Academic Writing and other Genres of Writing

Writing is one of the ways through which people communicate. People write different kinds and forms of writing such as poetry, stories, letters, e-mails and invitations. The reasons and purposes of each piece of writing vary one from the other. Academic writing is another form of writing but it has certain characteristics that make it different from the

other genres of writing. Besides, some EFL students are unaware about the differences that exist between academic writing and the other kinds of writing. This ignorance or unawareness is one of the major reasons that lead the students to produce poor academic papers. Bowker (2007) states a number of points which summarizes the difference between academic writing and the other genres of writing.

➢ **First in contrast, academic writing does many of the things that personal writing does not:** In academic writing students are required to follow a typical structure when they write their assignments. Initially, they have to start with the introduction where they state the main issue, their position and the topic will be discussed in the paper**.** After the introduction there is the body. In the body, the writers develop their ideas. It presents, analyzes and discusses the subject. The body depends more on the writers' readings about the issue. Lastly, those writers or students need to conclude the paper. The conclusion is not a summary, in fact, it is a sum up of what has been discussed in relation to the question.

➢ **A second difference between academic writing and other genres is based on the citation of published authors:** In academic writing knowing how to cite and reference is central, because it shows that writers have drawn their work upon the literature which has been published by other writers about the issue since using other people's ideas as own ideas is called plagiarism. There ar a variety of referencing systems such as APA (American Psychological Association) which is used in psychology, education, and some social sciences.

➢ **Third, in academic writing we should follow rules of punctuation and grammar:** Academic writing is a kind of writing where writers need to pay attention to spelling and especially grammar and punctuation, because the reader is unlike a friend or a member of the family and s/he will not always know what the writer is referring to. Hence,

punctuation and grammar are important issues that maintain clarity and avoid ambiguity in expression in academic writing.

To summarize, academic writing is a special genre of writing that holds its own rules and practices. Following formal structure to present ideas, the citation of others works and following particular conventions of punctuation and grammar are examples of the rules and practices that should be found in any academic paper.

## 2.3 The Purpose of Academic Writing

According to Bailey (2015, p. 3), most writers write for one of the following reasons:

- To report on a piece of research the writer has conducted.
- To answer a question the writer has been given or chosen.
- To discuss a subject of common interest and gives the writers view.
- To synthesize research done by other on a topic.

However, according to Whitaker (2009) the most common purposes of academic writing are to persuade, analyze, and inform.

➢ **Persuasive Purpose:** In persuasive academic writing, the writer's aim is to persuade or convince the readers, and attempt to change their view about a particular issue through the support of his/her position and the use of arguments.

➢ **Analytical Purpose:** In analytical academic writing, the purpose is to think deeply, investigate causes, examine effects, evaluate effectiveness, assess way to solve problems, find the relationship between various ideas and analyze others' arguments.

➢ **Informative Purpose:** In informative academic writing, the aim is not to impose a point of view, but rather to enlarge the readers' view about the writer's topic by giving them new information.

## 2.4 Features of Academic Writing

As mentioned before, academic writing is different from the other genres of writing. That is to say, there are key features that must be found in any academic paper different

from the other kinds of writing. According to many researchers, the common features of academic writing are:

### 2.4.1 Relevance to Question

In academic paper writing, it is essential that the work should be directly relevant to the topic as Davies (as cited in Khadraoui, 2016, p. 21) asserts "successful academic writing must address a topic or title clearly". In other words, the writer needs to understand clearly the question being asked and then find the possible answers. Afterwards, the writer discusses, interprets, and tries to prove his or her answers through logical arguments.

### 2.4.2 Organization

Organization is a key element in academic writing, that is why it is necessary for academic writers to be aware about the importance of presenting their thoughts and ideas within an organized and well structured work. Starkey (2004, pp. 1-2) indicates that "when you being your essay with organization, you will have guidance and direction through the writing process". This entails that writers need first to think about organizing their work before they start writing, in other words, they need to put an outline initially.

Furthermore, both Greetham (2001) and Whitaker (2009) claim that organization in academic writing means to follow a standard pattern, basically introduction, body and conclusion. They agree that the introduction is a key part where the writer tries to catch the readers' attention and provide background information about the topic. After the introduction, writers need to develop the body in which they present a number of alternative points of view and achieve a sense of argumentation. The last part is the conclusion which is a sum up of the main points. The most important in these steps is that each paragraph must logically lead to the next one, and there should be a kind of cohesion and coherence.

### 2.4.3 Objectivity

Objectivity or writing in the third person as some writers refer to is a must in academic writing. Being objective means that the writer has to avoid personal judgments and biases. Judgmental words such as terrible and fantastic should be also avoided. Symth (as cited in Hartely, 2008, p. 3) describes good academic writing as follows:

> Good scientific writing is characterised by objectivity. This means that a paper must present a balanced discussion of a range of views . . .Moreover, value judgements, which involve moral beliefs of what is 'right' or 'wrong' must be avoided . . . The use of personal pronouns is unnecessary, and can lead to biases or unsupported assumptions. In scientific papers, therefore, personal pronouns should not be used. When you write a paper, unless you attribute an opinion to someone else, it is understood to be your own. Phrases such as 'in my opinion' or 'I think,' therefore, are superfluous and a waste of words . . . For the same reasons, the plural pronouns *we* and *our* are not used.

Moreover, learners must be objective when writing their academic papers, because the focus is not on the learner himself, but rather on the topic and ideas s/he presents. In other words, the aim of the audience or readers in academic writing is to know what does the writer have studied and learned and how does this led him to various conclusions (Gillett et al., 2009).

### 2.4.4 Clarity

Academic writing is not confined only to relevance to question, organization and objectivity. Clarity is also an essential element that EFL learners have to be skilled at when they write their academic papers. It is necessary to convey the intended ideas and make a piece of writing readable and accessible. Thus, as the students do their work for readers, they should not make them think hardly to understand their ideas. Thus their thoughts should be clearly and completely explained (Whitaker, 2009). In addition, Murray and Hughes (2008) also insist on the issue of clarity. According to them using short sentences, being relevant and avoiding pretentious statements are key points that academic writers should follow to achieve clarity.

**2.4.5 Cohesion and Coherence**

Cohesion and coherence are two important elements that must be found not only in academic writing, but in any kind of writing. People often use those two terms interchangeably, yet it is important to note that they are not the same. Hinkel (2004, pp. 279-280) points out that "Cohesion usually refers to connections between sentences and paragraphs, and coherence can also refer to the organization of discourse with all elements present and fitting together logically". To strengthen his view he presents an example in which he says that "the presence of an introduction, a thesis statement, rhetorical support, and a conclusion can create a coherent essay that is not necessarily cohesive" (p. 280). Subsequently, if a text makes sense and it is correctly planned and interlinked by suitable linking words, if there is a clear sentences and smooth of ideas, we can say that the text or paper is cohesive and coherent and, accordingly it will be easily understood by readers.

**2.4.6 Critical**

Since academic writing involves expressing and formulating thoughts and opinions which have been read into new ideas, it is important to note that academic writing is critical. This means that students should not accept what they have read blindly, in other words, they need to ask questions, analyze and assess their readings; otherwise they would be accused of being descriptive because they state information as it is without examination and evaluation. Indeed, Gillett, et al (2009, p. 97) state that "Students who do not write critically tend to regurgitate their lecturers' notes or textbook material with no analysis, overuse quotations without expanding on the ideas further and treat information found in sources as facts to be reproduced."

**2.4.7 Referencing**

Referencing is considered to be one of the main features of academic writing because it entails that the writer has done efforts and made readings about the subject s/he is

tackling. According to Gilltte, et al (2009), as writers draw their arguments based on the work of other writers, they have to acknowledge that they have used the ideas of those authors, if not, the work will be considered as non academic and makes the writer guilty of plagiarizing. Lipson (2006, p. 3) mentions three main reasons for providing references:

- To give credit to others' work and ideas, whether you agree with them or not. When you use their words, you must give them credit by using both quotation marks and citations.
- To show readers the materials on which you base your analysis, your narrative, or your conclusions.
- To guide readers to the materials you have used so they can examine it for themselves. Their interest might be to confirm your work, to challenge it, or simply to explore it further.

**2.5 The Process of Academic Writing**

Writing academically is not an easy task, it is more than putting words together on a piece of paper. Academic writing is a long process that starts from choosing the topic and ends with publishing. Kane (1988, p. 17) writes that "Writing in its broad sense—as distinct from simply putting words on paper—has three steps: thinking about it, doing it, and doing it again (and again and again, as often as time will allow and patience will endure)". Kane mentions three broad steps of academic writing, yet each of these steps includes a number of sub-steps. The first step which is "thinking about it" or as some writers call it the prewriting step, involves choosing the topic, researching or exploring the topic, and planning or outlining the work. The second step, "doing it", in this step there is only one sub-step that is drafting. The last step is "doing it again", in here writers need to revise, edit and proofread. If writers or students have covered all the above steps, their work or paper will be ready to be given to their teachers or published.

**2.5.1 Choosing a Topic**

The writing process involves making many decisions among them choosing a topic. Sometimes the teacher gives the students a list of possible topics, and other times they have the freedom to choose their own topics. Many students consume a lot of time looking for an appropriate topic, and they feel troubled when they come to this stage. Tent (as cited in

Meddour & Hassina, 2016) asserts that the choice of the topic should be based on the students' or writers' intellectual interests, personal experiences and favorite research areas. In other words, students need to choose topics that meet their interests and they should be also interesting to their audience. If students choose topics in which they are truly interested, their enthusiasm will be clearly shown in their writing. Personal experience is another criterion that should be considered when selecting a topic. If writers have already experienced the topic, they will of course acquire certain knowledge which will in turn help them to focus on their subject. That is to say, it helps them to define and specify the areas of their topic. Hence, the choice of the topic is not random, it is a task that needs concentration and the fulfillment of certain conditions.

### 2.5.2 Doing Research

After having chosen the topic, the next step is to do some efforts and start searching and reading about the topic. It is worth noting that students should look only for useful materials and information which are relevant to their topic. Making readings will be surely beneficial to enlighten the writers' minds, and assist them either to clearly understand their topics which in turn will contribute in the next stage which is planning, or change the topic if they do not find enough information (Bowker, 2007).

### 2.5.3 Planning (Outlining)

Some students think that once the topic is chosen, explored, and certain knowledge has been achieved about it, they should start writing. This can be true in some cases such as a personal letter, but in academic writing it is essential to create an outline in advance (Department of Education WA, 2013). Galko (2001) mentions that writers need to outline because:

> First, an outline helps you think through what you will say, so it can save you time when you actually start writing. In addition, it can show omissions in your paper. An outline can even help you avoid writer's block! One of the most important reasons to do an outline before you start writing is to help you evaluate your thesis.

In short, the planning stage makes the work systematic and well organized. Students will know which idea should be first, which one should be next, and which one should be last or which one should be omitted.

**2.5.4 Writing the First Draft**

Drafting or "doing it" as kane (1988) called it, is the stage where writers really start writing. According to the Department of Education of Western Australia (2013, p. 217) drafting is "Drafting is the process of transferring initial ideas or plans into texts". The department also asserts that "The focus when drafting is on content, rather than the mechanics or conventions of writing". Therefore, when writing the first draft students should not worry about the grammatical, spelling, or punctuation mistakes. Indeed, they have to make sure that all what they are writing is relevant. Another point that students should consider in this step is to cite sources; so that, they do not cleave in plagiarism. The most important in the drafting stage is to maintain fluency rather than accuracy.

**2.5.5 Revising**

Once students have produced the first draft, they need then to look over what they have written and revise their work to correct mistakes and improve it. Revising is defined as it is "Revising generally refers to changes made to ideas and organization at the text level. This could involve students rearranging the order of paragraphs or sentences to improve the text sequence." (Department of Education WA, 2013, p. 223). In brief, in the revision step writers or students are required to check different points such as clarity, coherence, unity of ideas and others. Bowker (2007) claims that once the students have finished the first draft they should leave it at least 24 hours, afterwards they start the revising stage. According to him this will assist the writers to refresh their minds, then come back to their first draft with critical eye.

Furthermore, Galko (200, p. 75) suggests the following checklist that writers need to consider when revising their academic papers:

- Does the introduction clearly explain what the paper is about? Does it prepare the reader for what comes next?
- Is the thesis statement clear?
- Does each paragraph relate to the thesis statement?
- Are the main ideas—topic sentences—related to the thesis statement? Do they back it up?
- Do the paragraphs support the thesis statement? Is the support specific? Is it convincing?
- Does the conclusion logically end the paper? Does it give a take-home message that stems from the rest of the paper?
- Overall, does the paper meet the goals of the assignment? Does it meet personal goals?

## 2.5.6 Editing

Many students think that revising and editing are the same, however they are different stages. Revising means to check the draft at the text level; while, editing means to check the draft at the sentence level to correct spelling, and mechanical errors. In this step, students might add, change, delete, or organize words to improve the meaning (Department of Education WA, 2013). Like the revising stage, when editing writers need to consider the following points:

- Is the spelling correct? Did you use the spell check on the computer or look up words you weren't sure about in a dictionary?
- Is the grammar correct? Are there any sentence fragments or run on sentences?
- Have you used punctuation correctly?
- Have you correctly used capital letters?
- Have you used words correctly throughout the paper?

<div align="center">(Galko, 2001, p. 102)</div>

## 2.5.7 Proofreading

In the proofreading stage students try to detect slight mistakes in their papers. In this respect, Hacker and Sommers (2012, p. 39) agree that "Proofreading is a special kind of reading: a slow and methodical search for misspellings, typographical mistakes, and omitted words or word endings". Proofreading is the final step in the academic writing process, thus once the paper is proofread this means that it is ready for publishing.

## 2.6 Approaches to Teaching Writing

Teaching writing has a special importance and it is increasingly becoming more interesting in EFL classes. Different approaches to teaching writing have been proposed by EFL teachers and researchers in order to assist English language teachers to improve their learners' writing. In this respect, the role of the teacher is to adopt suitable and effective approaches to successfully teach writing. Moreover, the choice of an approach depends on what the teacher wants his students to do, does he want them to focus on the final product or on the process of writing or on the different written genres (Harmer, 2007).

### 2.6.1 The Product Approach

The product approach is considered as the oldest and most practiced approach. According Gabrielatos (2002), the product approach is a traditional approach in which students are encouraged to mimic a model text which is usually presented and analyzed at an early stage. In other words, this approach is based on imitation. The teacher provides his students with a given pattern of text and they are supposed to construct and produce a new piece of writing following the sample given by the teacher.

In the product approach, writing is seen as a product. That is to say, the objective or the focus in this approach is on the students' final products rather than how they write it. When reading the students final products, teachers look if there is an appropriate use of vocabulary, grammar and if the text is readable or not. Hedge (as cited in Ben Sahla, 2015) mentions a number of aspects that teachers should find when correcting the students' final products which are:

- Getting the grammar right,
- Having a range of vocabulary,
- Punctuating meaningfully,
- Using the conventions of layout correctly,
- Spelling accurately,
- Using a range of vocabulary,
- Linking ideas and information to develop a topic, and

- Developing and organizing the content clearly and convincingly.

Furthermore, according to Hyland (2003) in the product approach learning to write include four stages:

➢ **Familiarization:** This stage attempts to make the students aware and familiarized with the conventions of writing such as grammar and vocabulary through the discussion and analysis of a model text.

➢ **Controlled Writing:** At this stage teachers ask their students to practice the language, conventions and structure used in the discussed model.

➢ **Guided Writing:** In the guided writing stage students are required to imitate the model text to organize their ideas.

➢ **Free writing:** It is the finale stage where students are expected to write the finale product (essay, letter, and so forth) in the same way as the model text.

The product approach has been criticized by many teachers and researchers especially for the concept of imitation and the ignorance of the writing process. It is true that it satisfies the learners' needs in terms of grammar, vocabulary and structure, but it executes the students freedom to think and write or communicate in their own styles (Hyland, 2003).

## 2.6.2 The Process Approach

As the product approach has been criticized and teachers began to feel that learning grammar, vocabulary and structure is not enough, researchers looked for a new approach that might be universally accepted which is the process approach. This new approach highlights the importance of creativity and imagination as Hyland (2003, p. 10) notes "the process approach to writing teaching emphasizes the writer as an independent producer of texts". Besides, the process approach focuses on how a text is written rather than on the final product. In other words, it pays attention to the process or steps that students should follow and pass through to compose a piece of writing (Hyland, 2003).

There are different views on the stages that a piece of writing should go through in the process approach. According to Teribble (as cited in Hamdaoui, 2016) this approach includes four stages. Initially students start with the prewriting stage where they try to gather information by applying a number of strategies such as brainstorming and clustering. This followed by the composing or drafting stage. In this stage learners are required to write their first drafts using the ideas that have been gathered in the previous stage. The next step is to revise their writings. Once the students have revised their drafts, the final stage is to edit the paper where they pay attention to mechanics such as grammar and punctuation to improve their papers.

Likewise the product approach, the process approach has also been attacked and criticized by some teachers, as it ignores the socio- cultural context as Hyland (2003, p. 10) asserts " students not only need help in learning how to write, but also in understanding how texts are shaped by topic, audience, purpose, and cultural norms". Harmer (2007) also asserts that it is time consuming as students have to collect ideas, draft until, the editing stage.

### 2.6.3 The Genre Approach

The genre approach to teaching writing is mainly concerned, as its name indicates, with teaching particular genres. Many researchers agree that this approach is considered as an extension of the product approach since both are predominantly linguistic. However, the genre approach differs from the product approach in the sense that it places an emphasis on the social context in which writing is produced and the relationship between the writer and the reader. In this respect, Hyland (2003, p. 18) argued that:

> Teachers who take a genre orientation to writing instruction look beyond subject content, composing processes and textual forms to see writing as attempts to communicate with readers. They are concerned with teaching learners how to use language patterns to accomplish coherent, purposeful prose.

He adds that the central belief of the genre approach is that students do no write for the sake of writing, yet they write to achieve a purpose. It is why it has been called "English for academic or special purposes" (Scott, 1996, p. 146).

According to Cope and Kalanties (as cited in Ben Sahla, 2015), using the genre approach means to follow three important stages. The first stage is modeling, in this stage teachers provide their students with a model of a particular genre, and they analyze and discuss the text structure, context and language. Learners then move to the next step which is constructing where they use the knowledge gained from the text model to manipulate relevant language forms. The last stage is called the individual construction, in this stage students write their own products individually.

## 2.7 Acknowledging Sources

One of the most important aspects of many types of academic writing is that it is necessary to acknowledge other people's works. In other words, if students or writers borrow from the work of another person, they have to show that they have done this. Leki (1998, p. 185) points out that there are three methods of acknowledging sources "summary, paraphrase or quotation".

## 2.7.1 Quoting sources

Quoting sources means to borrow not only ideas of another person, but also the person's exact words. Leki (1998) explains that writers quote sources rather than paraphrasing or summarizing them, when they find that the original text is more interesting or when they want the readers to know exactly what other writers have written. It is worth to note that it is important to "be careful when we quote others' words. They are sacred! We have no right to make any changes in them"(Monippaly & Pawar, 2010, p. 182).

Many researchers such as Jordon (1999), Gillett et al (2009) and others agree that quotations should not be overused, in order not to make the readers feel that the writer is

unable to change the words of the original text. Besides, Gillett et al (2009) mention three items that must be acknowledged when quoting which are respectively: The author's last name, the year of publication and the page number from which the text is taken.

**2.7.2 Summarizing and Paraphrasing**

As mentioned before, quotations should not be overused, thus writers need to look for other techniques to acknowledge sources. Unlike quoting, when summarizing or paraphrasing writers borrow only the ideas of other authors. Researchers consider those two methods to be difficult because they require active reading, effective comprehension and accurate reproduction of the original text.

On the one hand, summarizing means reducing the content of lengthy passages and retaining the main points. According to Bowker (2007, p12) "Summarising involves selecting out some key features and then using those to create a shortened version of the author's prose". Thus, writers summarize in order to avoid the trap of getting lost when reading long passages, and to save the readers' time and the trouble of reading the whole original text. Leki (1998, p. 186) suggests a number of points that may assist writers to write a good summary which are:

- Read the original carefully.
- Mention the source and the author at the beginning of the summary.
- State the author's main idea without distorting those ideas or adding your own.
- State the author's most important supporting evidence or subpoints without distorting them. Do not include details.
- Use your own wording. Occasionally, however, a phrase in the original may be especially striking, interesting, or controversial. In that case, you may use the author's exact words if you put quotation marks around them.
- Don't include your own ideas or comments. The summary should include only the author's ideas.
- Periodically remind the reader that you are summarizing someone else's idea.

On the other hand, paraphrasing means to restate the content of short passages as Bowker (2007, p. 13) notes "Paraphrasing means to restate information using different

words. Unlike summarizing though, paraphrasing focuses less on shortening and condensing the information. Paraphrasing aims to rewrite the information by drawing on different words and phrases". Likewise summarizing, in order to produce an effective paraphrase, writers need to follow the following steps:

- Replacing difficult vocabulary words or phrases with words the student understands
- Rewriting lengthy or complex sentences into simpler sentences, or combining simple sentences into more interesting, complex sentences
- Explaining concepts and abstract ideas from sentences or passages using more clear and concise wording
- Translating ideas and information into students' own words

( Meddour & Hassina, 2016, p. 36)

**Conclusion**

Academic writing is an important issue that EFL learners in higher education need to be acquainted with, since they are required to write essays, dissertations and so forth. In this chapter we tried to analyze some of the most important points are concerned with the academic writing issue. We explained first the concept of academic writing and we presented a distinction between the later and the other genres of writing. Then, the chapter discussed the purpose behind writing academically. Additionally, we provided the readers with an idea about the features of academic writing and what process they should follow to write their academic papers. Finally, we studied the most significant writing approaches, and shed the light on the three main methods that writers should use to acknowledge their academic papers. The implementation of critical thinking skills in academic writing, especially when summarizing and paraphrasing, might be of a great help to improve students' academic papers.

# Chapter Three: Fieldwork and Data Analysis

## Chapter Three: Fieldwork and Data Analysis

**Introduction**

The present chapter is devoted to the field work and analysis of the data gathered from both students' and teachers' questionnaire. First, the chapter provides a theoretical background on the research methodology which is used in this study to investigate the importance of critical thinking in enhancing students' academic writing. In this respect, we discuss the adopted research method, the population and the way we select the sample, in addition to the data gathering tools used to collect data. Then, it displays a detailed analysis of the collected data followed by a discussion based on the obtained results, in order to confirm or refute the proposed hypothesis: If EFL learners become good critical thinkers their academic writing would be improved.

**3.1 Review of Research Methodology**

**3.1.1 Research Method**

The present study aims mainly at raising awareness among EFL students about the importance of the issue of critical thinking in developing learners' academic writing. It seeks also to identify the skills which assist students to understand, analyze and evaluate information, as well as the challenges faced by students when they write academically. Therefore, a descriptive method has been determined by the nature of the study and a qualitative research approach has been adopted for this work, because it is assumed to be appropriate to investigate the participants' perceptions towards the investigated issue, as it serves the main purpose which is to describe the obtained results.

**3.1.3 Data Gathering Tools**

In order to achieve the main objective of this study and to check the validity of our hypothesis, a questionnaire has been used as a tool in our investigation. It has been handed

to Master One students and teachers at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, to collect their attitudes and opinions towards the investigated topic.

### 3.1.2 Population and Sample of the Study

From a population of 194 Master One (Science of the Language) EFL students at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, a sample of fifty (50) students was selected in order to conduct our research. We have chosen Master One students as a sample of this study for two main reasons. First, they have a considerable experience at University, so they should be more acquainted about critical thinking. The second reason is that EFL students in our university study and practice academic writing only in the Master degree. In addition, we have also selected twelve (12) teachers of different courses to provide us with their valuable thoughts through responding to the questionnaire.

### 3.2 Students' Questionnaire

### 3.2.1 Aim of the Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire has been administrated for Master One EFL students to collect data about their views and opinions concerning the issue of critical thinking and academic writing. More specifically, this questionnaire was designed to inquire whether the students know critical thinking as a concept, its related kills, and if they practice those skills or not. The questionnaire seeks also to find out what are the students' common deficiencies in academic writing, as well as their different views concerning the importance of critical thinking in enhancing academic writing.

### 3.2.2 Description of the Students' Questionnaire

This questionnaire was used to obtain data about the subject matter under investigation. In order to produce a clear and comprehensible questionnaire we follow a number of models, as we try to link the questions in this questionnaire to the main

objectives of this study. Moreover, the questionnaire contains eighteen (18) main questions and seven (7) sub-questions. The questionnaire comprised a combination of both close ended and open ended questions. The former used to collect direct answers using yes/no and multi- choice questions, while the latter was used to obtain more details about the respondents' perspectives and views by asking for their opinions and justifications.

The questions have been divided into three sections namely: background information, critical thinking and academic writing sections. The first section was composed of five (5) questions and it intends to gather general information about the participants. The second section starts from question number six (6) an ends with the question number ten (10). This section attempts to constitute an idea about students' understanding and awareness of critical thinking. The last section was devoted to obtain the students' views concerning academic writing, more particularly in relation to critical thinking.

### 3.2.3 Administration of the Students' Questionnaire

This questionnaire was distributed hand to hand to Master One EFL students during the academic year 2018/2019. The respondents were available in Amphi Ein Bettaibi. Each Sunday at eight (8) o'clock we distributed to a number of the students' questionnaire because the majority of students were available in one day as they were on strike. Despite the obstacles, we have received a good amount of interaction. We have received more than fifty (50) questionnaires after distributing about fifty seven (57) questionnaires. The majority of the students have answered the whole questionnaire, while only few left the open ended questions blank.

### 3.2.4 Analysis of the Questionnaire

### Section one: Background Information

**Q 01:** Gender

**Table 3.1 Students' Gender**

| Gender | Number of Students | Percentages |
|--------|--------------------|-------------|
| Female | 44 | 88% |
| Male | 6 | 12% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
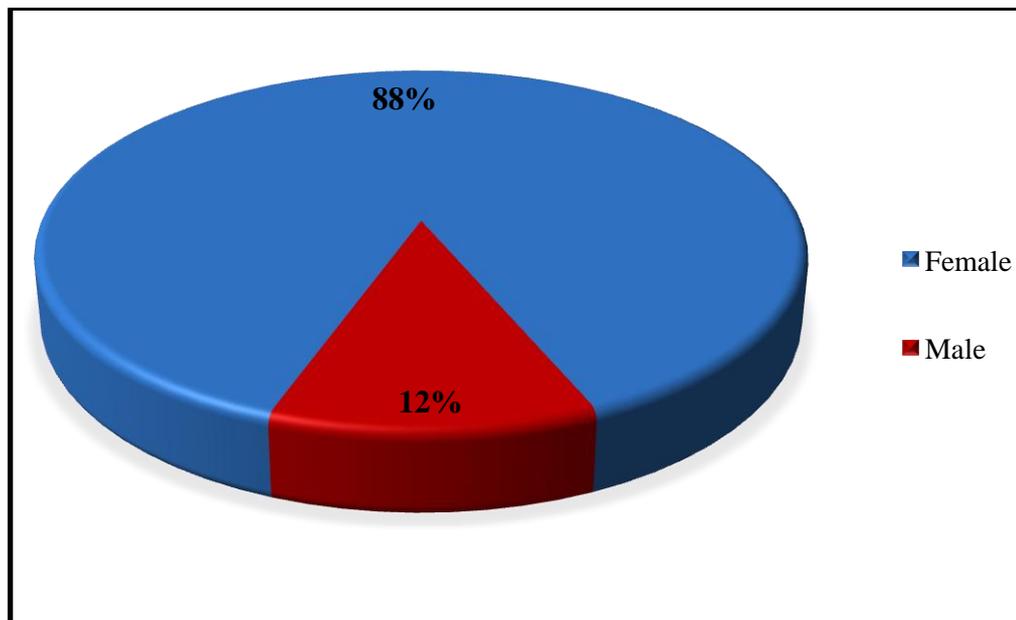


**Graph 3.1 Students' Gender**

This question demonstrated the students' gender. It provided the number of males and females as well as the percentages. As the table shows, the number of males was six that represents 12%, the number of females was 44 (88%). This implies that females are the prevailing category in Master One year LMD students.

**Q 02:** Age

**Table 3.2 Students' Age**

| Age | Number of Students | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| 20 to 22 | 36 | 72% |
| 23 to 25 | 10 | 20% |
| More than 25 | 4 | 8% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
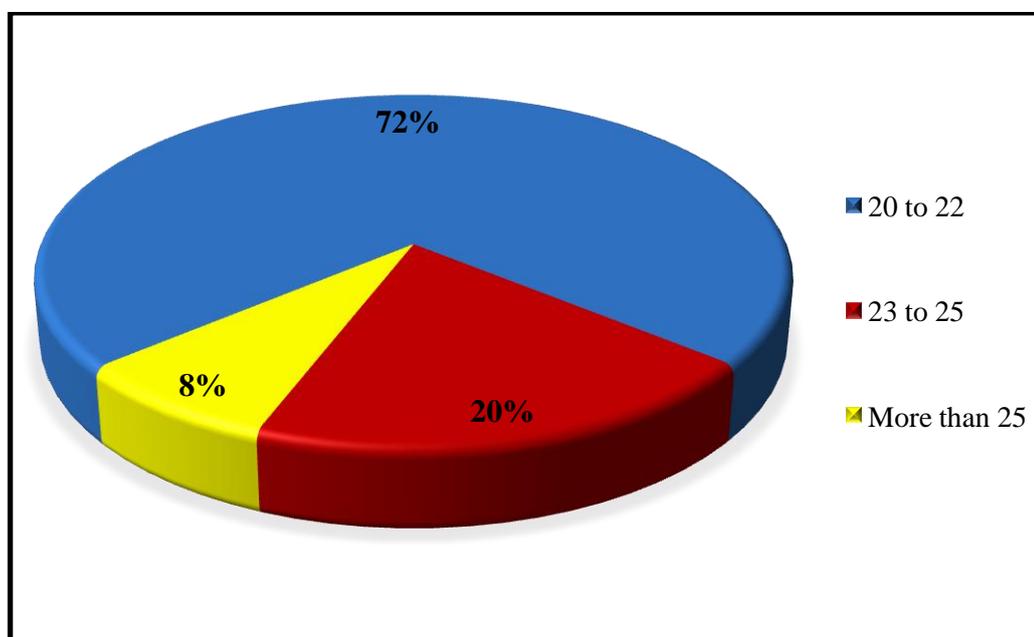


**Graph 3.2 Students' Age**

This question aimed to identify the average age of Master One EFL students. The majority of the participants (72%) were aged between 20 to 22 years. Other ten students representing (20%) were aged between 23 to 25 years. However, only 8% of them were more than 25 years old. This denotes that the students share approximately the same learning experiences.

**Q 03:** Your choice to study English was Personal or imposed?

**Table 3.3 Students' Choice to Study English**

| Choice | Number of Students | Percentages |
|--------|--------------------|-------------|
| a. Personal | 48 | 96% |
| b. Imposed | 2 | 4% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
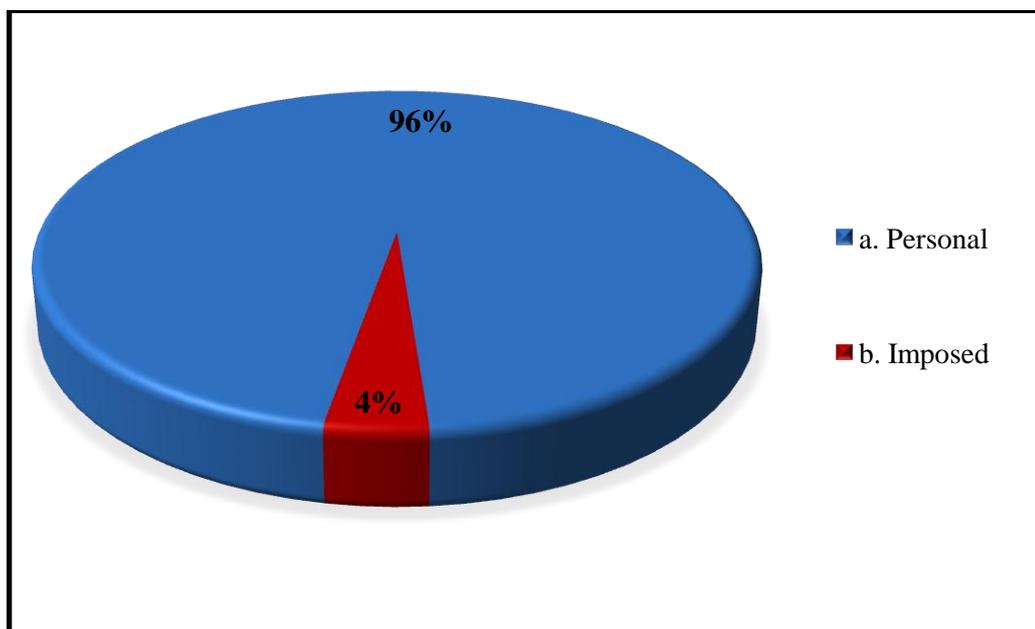


**Graph 3.3 Students' Choice to Study English**

The question sought to achieve whether or not the respondents willingly had chosen to study the English language. The results as shown in the table and the graph indicate that the majority of students had chosen to study English according to their personal need without any kind of compulsion. In contrast, a very few students (4%) asserted that they were obliged, so they were not motivated to study English since it was not their choice.

**Q 04:** How would you describe your level in English?

**Table 3.4 Learners' Level in English**

| Level | Number of Students | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| a. Good | 17 | 34% |
| b. Average | 33 | 66% |
| c. Bad | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
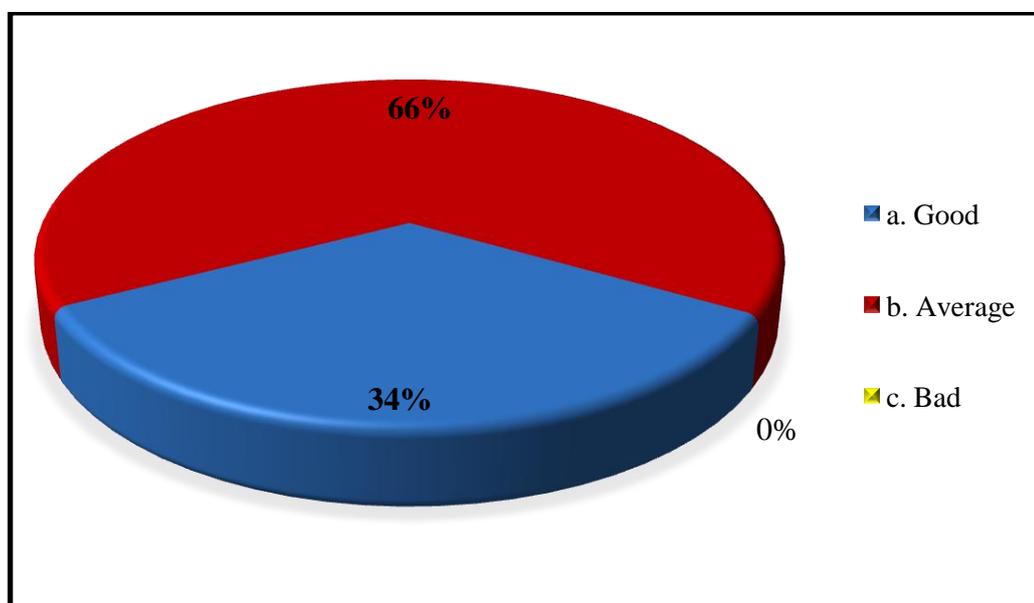


**Graph3.4 Students' Level in English**

This question aimed to identify the learners' evaluation of their level in the English language. The results reveal that 34% of the students consider their in English as good. Besides, 66% of them believe that they are average learners, while none of those respondents claimed that s/he has a weak level in English. Therefore, it can be considered that the level of Master One students is acceptable in accordance with their self-evaluation.

**Q 05:** You have applied for master degree to:

**Table 3.5 Students' Reason to Get the Master Degree**

| Reason | Number of Students | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| a. To obtain more job opportunities. | 25 | 50% |
| b. Upgrade level in education. | 15 | 30% |
| a + b | 10 | 20% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
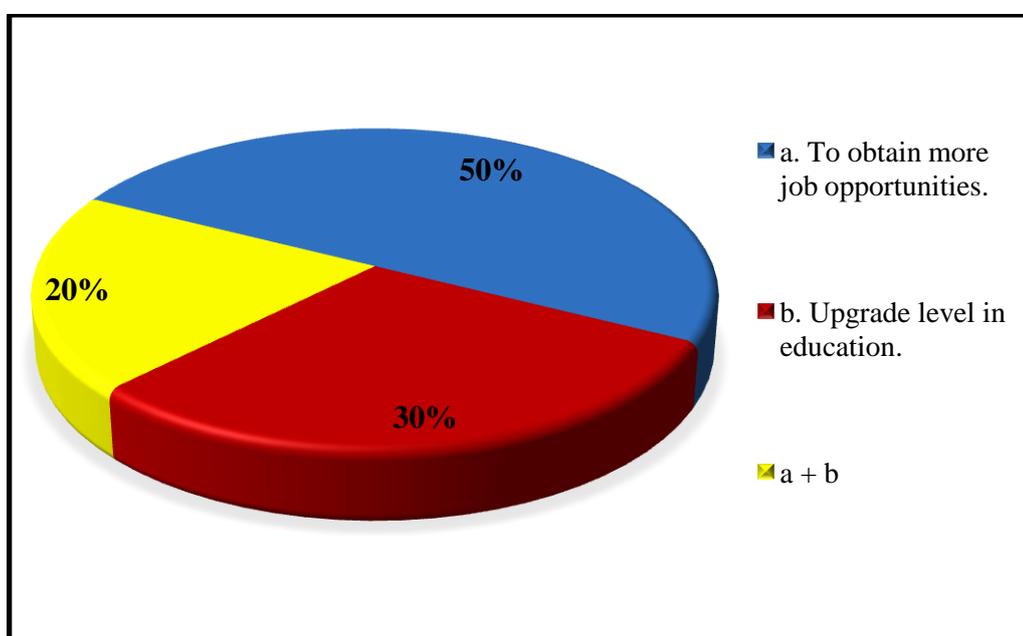


**Graph3.5 Students' Reason to Get the Master Degree**

This question intends to identify the students' reasons behind applying for the Master Degree. The rates above denote that the majority of the learners (50%) asserted that they applied for the Master Degree for the purpose of getting more job opportunities. On the contrary, 30% of them reported that they asked for the Master's degree to expand their knowledge in their specialism. Moreover, a group of students representing 20% claimed that their aim behind the application was to get both more job opportunities and upgrade their level in English.

**Section Two: Critical Thinking**

**Q 06:** Have you ever heard about the term critical thinking?

**Table 3.6 Students' Familiarity with Critical Thinking**

| Choice | Number of students | Percentages |
|--------|--------------------|-------------|
| Yes | 48 | 96% |
| No | 2 | 4% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
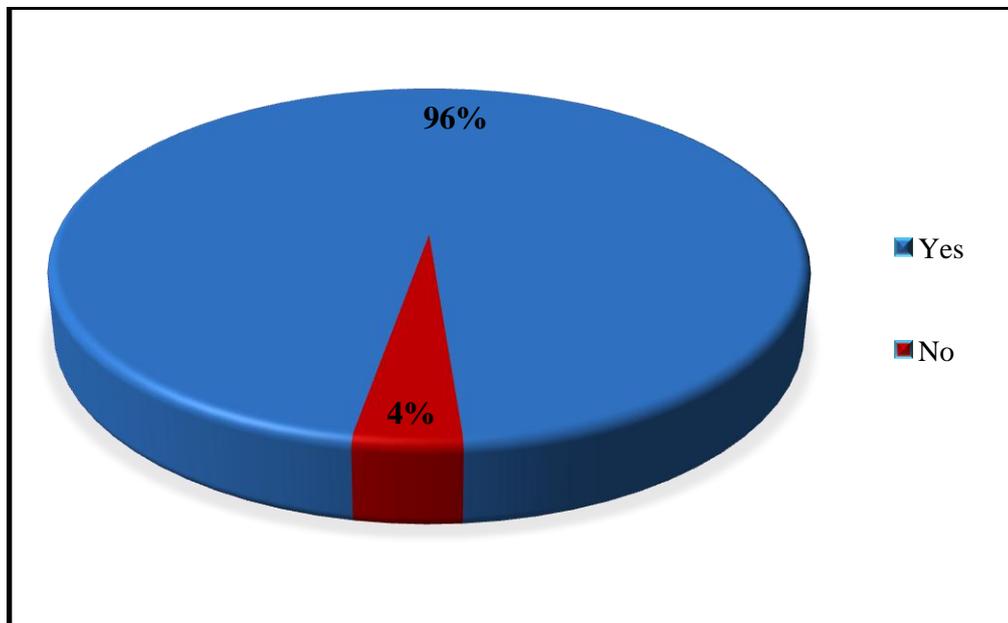


**Graph 3.6 Students' Familiarity with Critical Thinking**

This question was designed to determine whether or not the students are familiar with the concept of critical thinking. The results revealed that the majority of learners (96%) knew or had heard about the concept of critical thinking. However, only 4% of them claimed that they did not know this concept.

**Q 6.1:** If yes, what do you think it means:

**Table 3.7 Students' Perceptions about the Meaning of Critical Thinking**

| Definition | Number of Students | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| **a. Thinking more deeply and avoiding blind acceptance of ideas.** | 10 | 20% |
| **b. Judging ideas and finding the negative and positive parts.** | 3 | 6% |
| **c. Being more constructive.** | 0 | 0% |
| **All of them** | 29 | 58% |
| **a + b** | 6 | 12% |
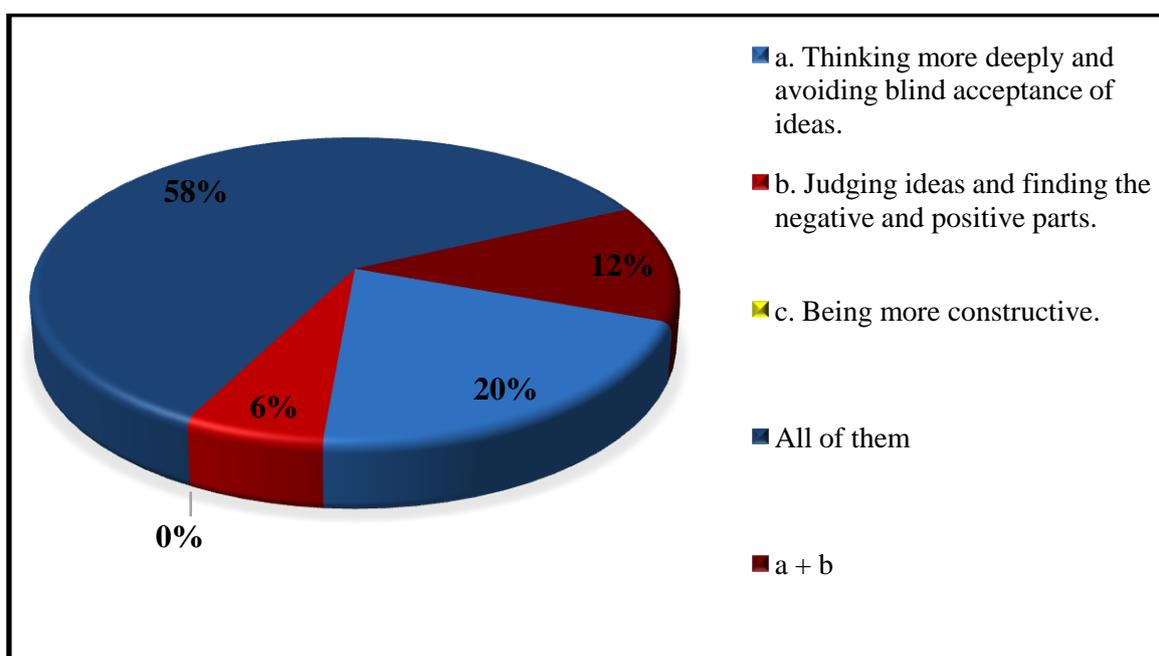


**Graph 3.7 Students' Perceptions about the Meaning of Critical Thinking**

This sub-question was designed to obtain more information about the participants' views about critical thinking. The learners were asked to choose from a number of multiple choices what they thought critical thinking meant. The students' choices were as the table and graph show: On one hand, 20% of the respondents assumed that critical thinking means thinking more deeply and avoiding blind acceptance of ideas. On the other, only 6%

of them claimed that critical thinking refers to judging ideas and finding the negative and positive parts, while none of them had chosen the third option. Conversely, the majority (58%) believe that critical thinking considers all the above suggested options. The last 12% of learners chose both thinking deeply and avoiding blind acceptance of ideas with judging ideas and finding the negative and positive parts as a denotation to critical thinking. It seems from the students' choices that the majority of them are aware of and familiar with critical thinking.

**Q 07**: Do you think that you are a critical thinker?

**Table 3.8 Students' Belief in Themselves as Critical Thinkers**

| Choice | Number of Students | Percentages |
|--------|-------------------|-------------|
| Yes | 20 | 40% |
| No | 3 | 6% |
| Do not know | 27 | 54% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
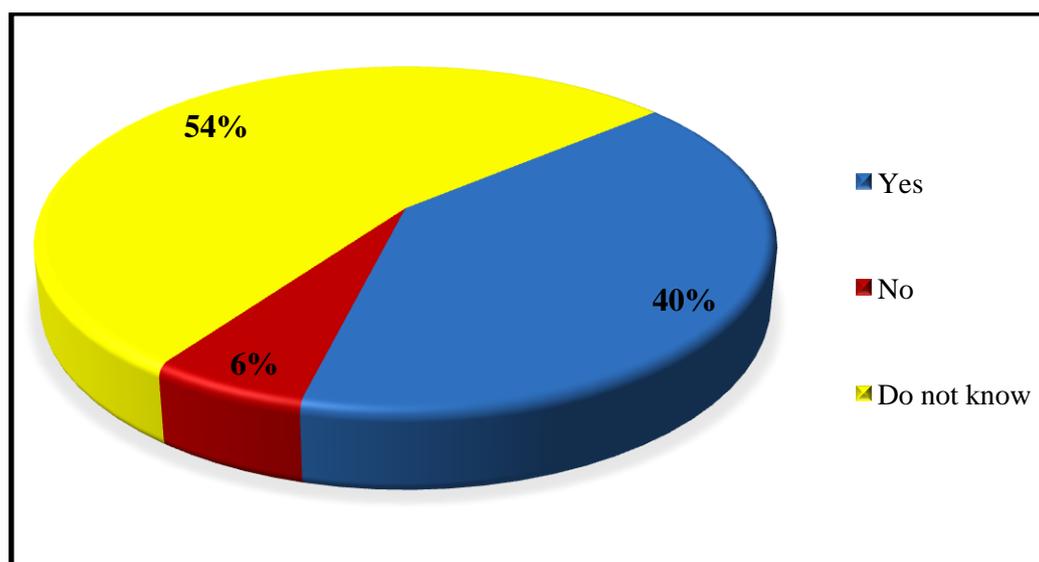


**Graph 3.8 Students' Belief in Themselves as Critical Thinkers**

The above question aimed to know whether or not the learners believed in themselves as good critical thinkers or not, and to ensure if they were really familiar and aware about critical thinking. The rates revealed that 40% of the participants believed in themselves as critical thinkers, while a very few (6%) confirmed that they were not critical thinkers. Finally, the majority of the students (54%) asserted that they did not know if they were critical thinkers or not. As the majority of participants do not know if they are critical thinkers this means that they are not really acquainted with the concept of critical thinking.

**Q 7.1:** If yes, which characteristic (s) of good critical thinker do you have?

**Table 3.9 Students' Characteristics of Good Critical Thinkers**

| Characteristics | Number of Students | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| a. Open-mindedness. | 1 | 2% |
| b. Willingness to engage in complex tasks. | 0 | 0% |
| c. Considers different perspectives. | 1 | 2% |
| d. Plans and thinks ahead. | 0 | 0% |
| All of them | 10 | 20% |
| a + c | 5 | 10% |
| c + d | 3 | 6% |
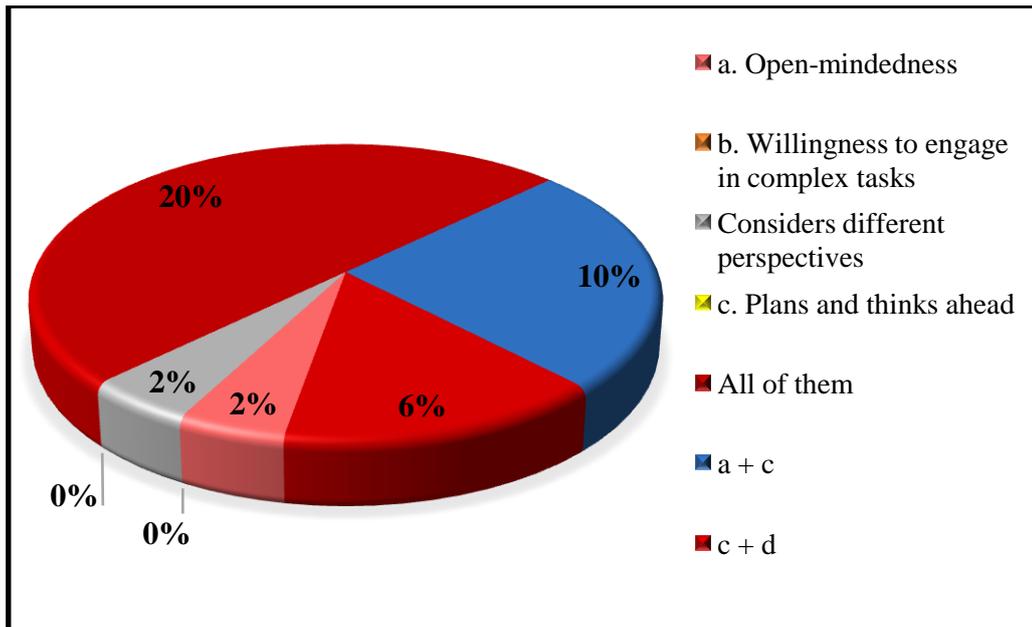
**Graph 3.9 Students' Characteristics of Good Critical Thinkers**

In this question we asked the students to determine which characteristics of good critical thinkers they own. The aim of this question was to know whether or not the students are aware about their critical thinking abilities. As the results show only 2% believed that they are open-minded learners, it is the same percentage for those who chose the third option which is considering different perspectives. On the contrary, none of them thought that s/he has a willingness to engage in complex tasks or the one who plans and thinks ahead. Conversely, the majority (20%) reported that they have all the provided characteristics. 10% of the participants claimed that they are both open-minded students and those who consider different perspectives. The rest 6% claimed that they have both characteristics "c" and "d" which refers to the ability to consider different perspectives and to plan and think ahead. Therefore, this result proves that the participants who answered in the aforementioned question with "yes" are really good critical because they know exactly which characteristics they have and which ones they do not have.

**Q 08:** To what extent do you think that critical thinking is important?

**Table 3.10 Importance of Critical Thinking**

| Choice | Number of Students | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| a. Very important | 32 | 64% |
| b. Important | 17 | 34% |
| c. Less important | 1 | 2% |
| d. Not important | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
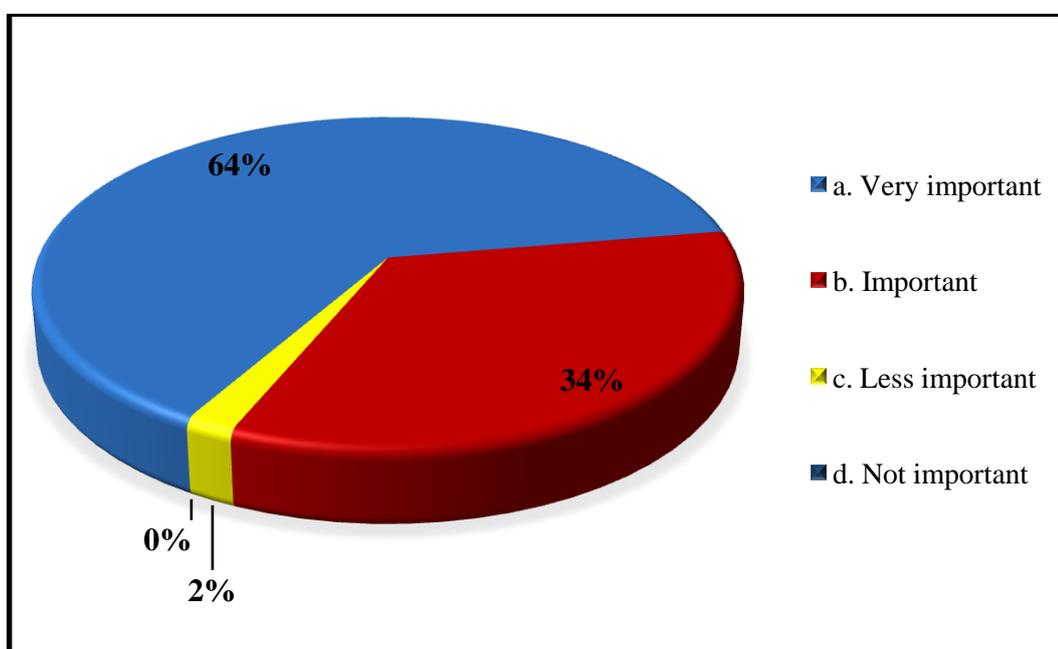


**Graph 3.10 Importance of Critical thinking**

Referring back to the above results, the majority of the participants (64%) believed that critical thinking is a very important issue. Besides, 34% of students reported that critical thinking is important. Yet, a few of them (2%) claimed that critical thinking is not an important issue, while none of those participants claimed that critical thinking is not important. Consequently, it can be concluded that all the respondents agreed on the importance of critical thinking.

**Q 09**: In what way(s) do you think you can improve critical thinking?

**Table 3.11 Ways for Improving Critical Thinking**

| Ways | Number of Students | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| a. Written assignments. | 6 | 12% |
| b. Classroom discussion. | 7 | 14% |
| c. Question / Answer interaction. | 5 | 10% |
| d. Reading texts. | 6 | 12% |
| All of them | 11 | 22% |
| b + c | 6 | 12% |
| b + d | 9 | 18% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
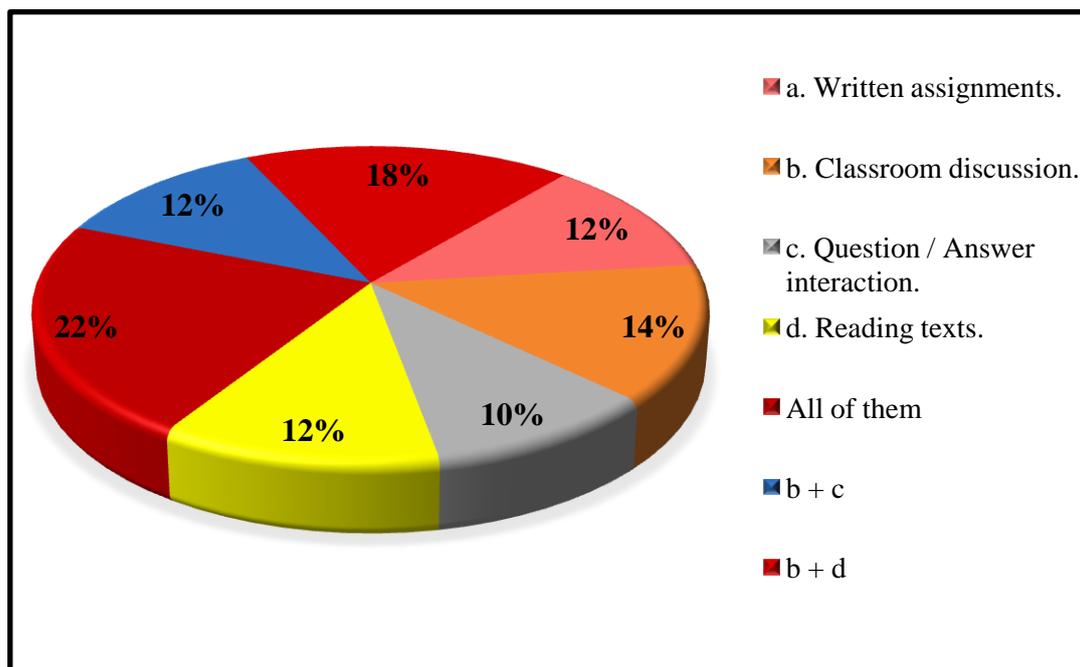


**Graph 3.11 Ways for Improving Critical Thinking**

This question aimed to know which strategies the students do think are better to improve their critical thinking, and it is clear from the table and the graph that they have

different views. The results indicate that 12% of the learners prefer written assignments as a way to enhance their critical thinking, and it is the same percentage for those who chose the question/ answer interaction strategy. Additionally, 14% of the respondents believed that they can improve their critical thinking through classroom discussion, while only 10% believed that their critical thinking can be improved if they keep on reading texts. Moreover, the majority (22%) claimed that their critical thinking would be better improved if they went through all the above mentioned ways. Another group of students assumed that critical thinking can be improved through only two ways, in this respect 12% chose both classroom discussion and question/ answer interaction, whereas 18% preferred both classroom discussion and reading texts. Subsequently, it is noticeable from the results that the most preferable way for improving critical thinking is the classroom discussion.

**Q 10:** Do you know the critical thinking skills?

**Table 3.12 Students' Awareness about the Critical Thinking Skills**

| Choice | Number of Students | Percentages |
|--------|--------------------|-------------|
| Yes | 21 | 42% |
| No | 29 | 58% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
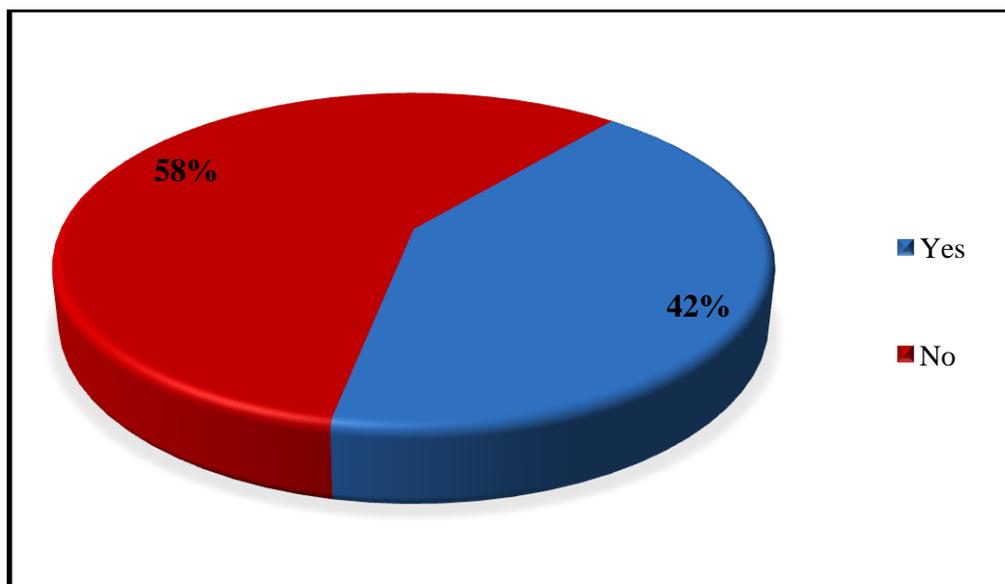
**Graph 3.12 Students' Awareness about the Critical Thinking Skills**

This question has been designed to know whether the students are acquainted with critical thinking as a general concept or they are more knowledgeable about it. In this question we asked the students if they know the skills related to critical thinking. As the results show, the majority of participants representing 58% asserted that they do not know the critical thinking skills. On the contrary, 42% of them reported that they do know those skills. Hence, it can be concluded that the majority of participants are not really acquainted with critical thinking.

**Q 10.1:** If yes, do you practice them in the classroom activities and assignments?

**Table 3.13 The Practicability of Critical Thinking Skills**

| Choice | Number of Students | Percentages |
|--------|--------------------|-------------|
| Yes    | 16                 | 32%         |
| No     | 5                  | 10%         |
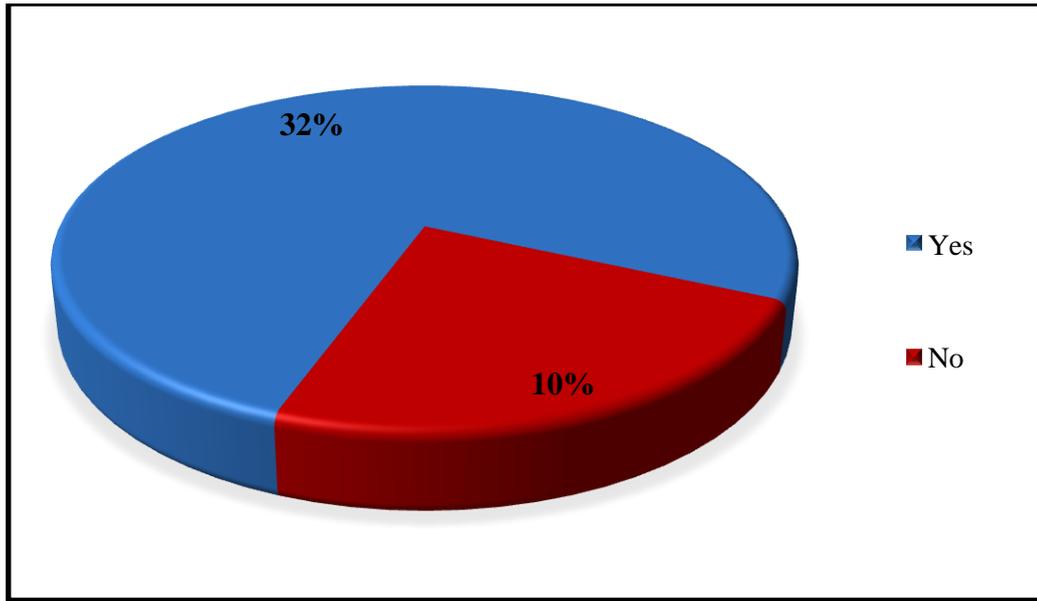
**Graph 3.13 The Practicability of Critical Thinking Skills**

This sub-question was designed to determine if the students who assumed that they know the critical thinking skills are aware about their importance and whether or not they practice them. As can be seen in the table and the graph the majority (32%) practice the critical thinking skills when performing their classroom activities and assignments. Conversely, only 5 participants representing 10% reported that they do not practice the skills related to critical thinking.

## Section Three: Academic Writing

**Q 11:** How can you define academic writing?

**Table 3.14 Definition of Academic Writing**

| Definition | Number of Students | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| a. Writing that demands formal language and vocabulary. | 14 | 28% |
| b. Writing that should be organized, clear, and coherent. | 7 | 14% |
| c. Writing that involves providing evidence to support a position. | 8 | 16% |
| d. Writing that is based on critical judgments of others' ideas and suggesting ones' own ideas. | 1 | 2% |
| All of them | 13 | 26% |
| a + b | 7 | 14% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
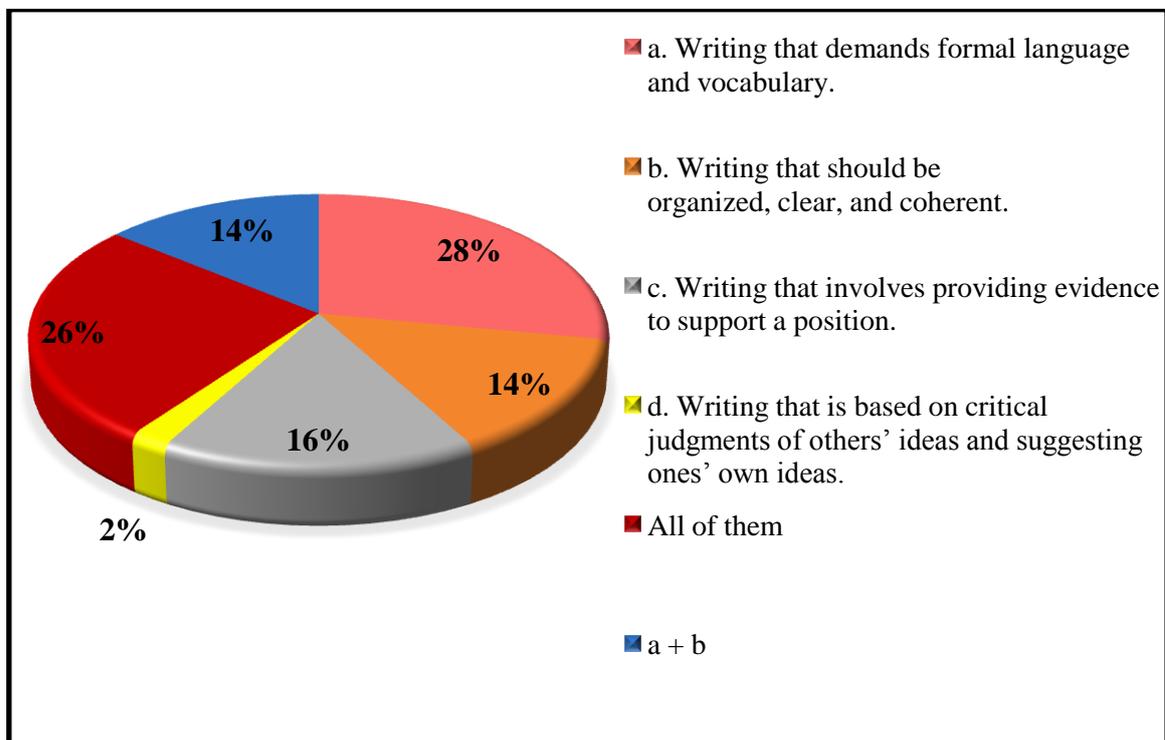


**Graph 3.14 Definition of Academic Writing**

The table and the graph above show the different views and perceptions of the respondents concerning the definition of academic writing. Students' responses indicate that the majority (28%) of them define academic writing as writing that demands formal language and vocabulary. Besides, 14% revealed that academic writing refers to writing that should be organized, clear and coherent. In addition, 16% view this kind of writing as writing that involves providing arguments to convince, persuade and to support a position. However, only one person who represents 2% chose the fourth option which is writing that is based on critical judgments of others' ideas and suggesting ones' own ideas. Additionally, 26% is the percentage of the students who claimed that academic writing comprises all the four definitions. Whereas, the rest of the respondents consider academic writing as both writing that demands formal language and vocabulary, and the one which should be organized, clear and coherent.

**Q 12**: Do you differentiate between academic writing and the other genres of writing?

**Table 3.15 Students' Awareness about the Difference between Academic Writing and the Other Genres of Writing**

| Choice | Number of Students | Percentages |
|--------|--------------------|-------------|
| Yes | 32 | 64% |
| No | 18 | 36% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
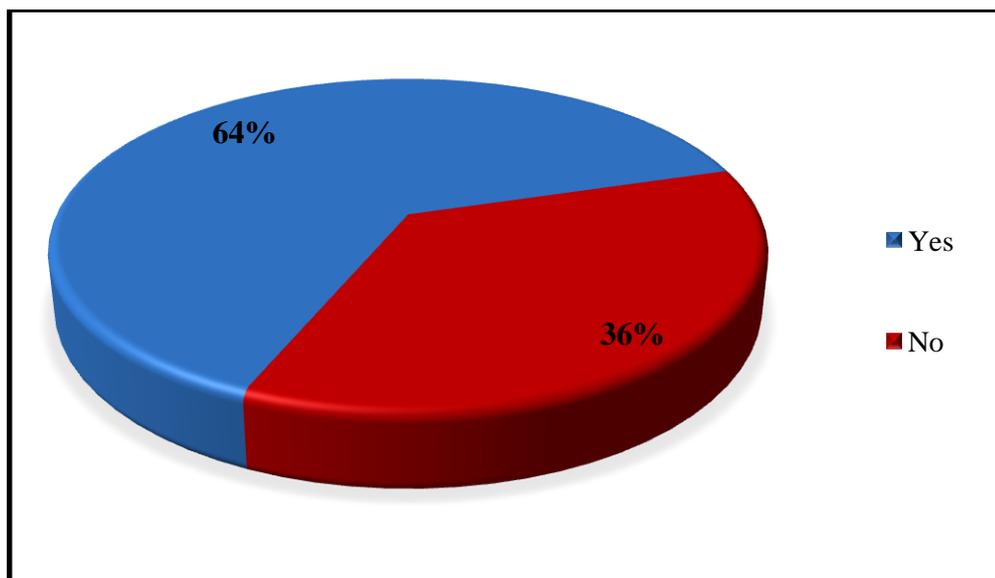
**Graph 3.15 Students' Awareness about the Difference between Academic Writing
and the Other Genres of Writing**

The aim of this question was to determine whether the learners are able to differentiate between academic writing and the other kinds of writing or not. We notice from the percentages that the majority which represents 64% are able to distinguish between academic writing and the other types of writing. Whereas 36% thought that they are not able to differentiate between these genres, this might be the result of not teaching the academic writing course till the Master Degree.

**Q 12.1**: If yes, state one or two differences?

This sub-question was asked in order to make sure whether the students who respond that they can differentiate between academic writing and the other genres of writing are really able to do it or not. It is important to note that not all the students had answered this question, and they left it a blank space. Their responses were as follows: the majority of them reported that academic writing does not include contractions, vagueness and flourish language. They also state that academic writing has a formal style which cannot be found in the other genres. Other students mention that in academic writing writers follow a

scientific way of stating facts and opinions which is based on critical and logical thinking. They add that writers in academic writing are required to be objective and avoid personal judgments. Finally, three respondents states that academic writing is based on stating evidence and referencing sources in order to avoid plagiarism.

**Q 13:** How often do you write academically?

**Table 3.16 Frequency of Writing Academically**

| Frequency | Number of Students | Percentages |
|-----------|--------------------|-------------|
| a. Always | 6 | 12% |
| b. Often | 14 | 28% |
| c. Sometimes | 22 | 44% |
| d. Rarely | 7 | 14% |
| e. Never | 1 | 2% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
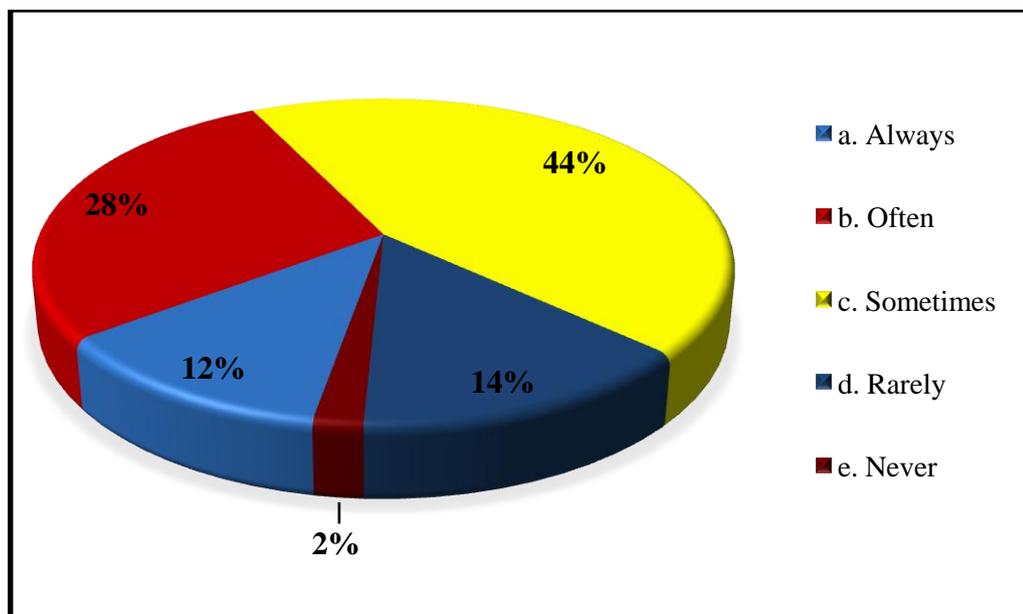


**Graph 3.16 Frequency of Writing Academically**

This question identifies the frequency of students' academic writing. According to the rates, 12% of the students declared that they always write academically. Besides, 28% of them claimed that they often write academic pieces. However, the majority of the respondents (44%) reported that they write only from time to time. Finally, 14% argued that their writing in academic forms is rare, while only 2% asserted that they never write academically.

**Q 14:** Do you find difficulties when writing academically in English?

**Table 3.17 Students' Perceptions about the Difficulty of Writing Academically**

| Choice | Number of Students | Percentages |
|--------|--------------------|-------------|
| Yes | 32 | 64% |
| No | 18 | 36% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
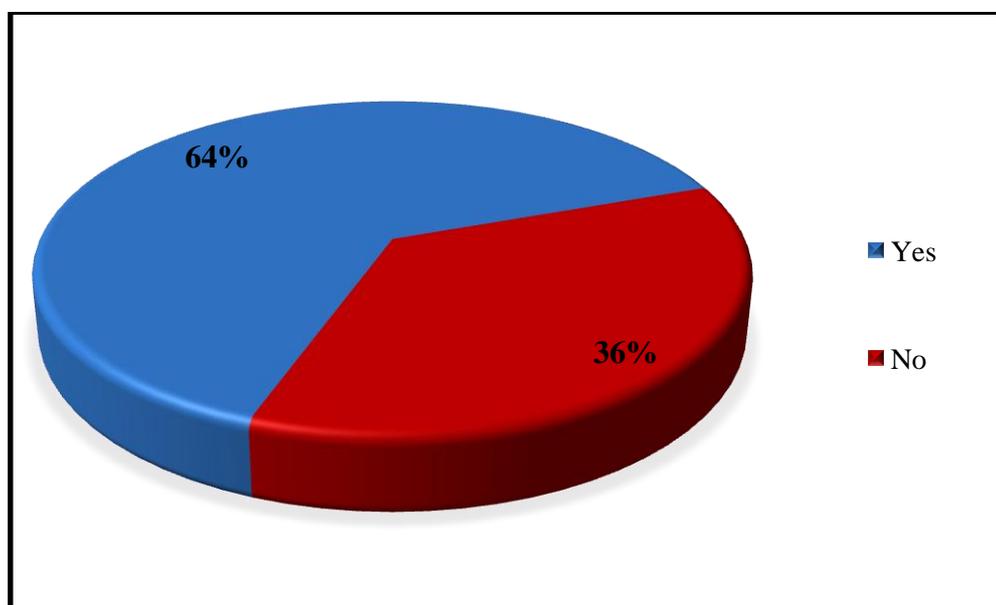


**Graph 3.17 Students' Perceptions about the Difficulty of Writing Academically**

This question has been proposed to find out whether or not the students face obstacles when writing their academic papers. As the results show, the majority (64%) revealed that

they face challenges to come up with an academic paper. Conversely, 36% of the respondents believed that academic writing is not a difficult task, as they asserted that they do not face any kind of difficulties.

**Q 14.1:** If yes, which kind of difficulties you face?

**Table 3.18 Kinds of Difficulties Faced by Students When Writing Academically**

| Difficulty | Number of Students | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| a. Organization and style | 6 | 12% |
| b. Lack of sources | 6 | 12% |
| c. Misunderstanding if the question | 3 | 6% |
| d. Punctuation and spelling mistakes | 1 | 2% |
| e. Inability to understand, evaluate, and analyze others' ideas | 5 | 10% |
| f. Falling into the trap of plagiarism | 3 | 6% |
| a + b + e | 18 | 16% |
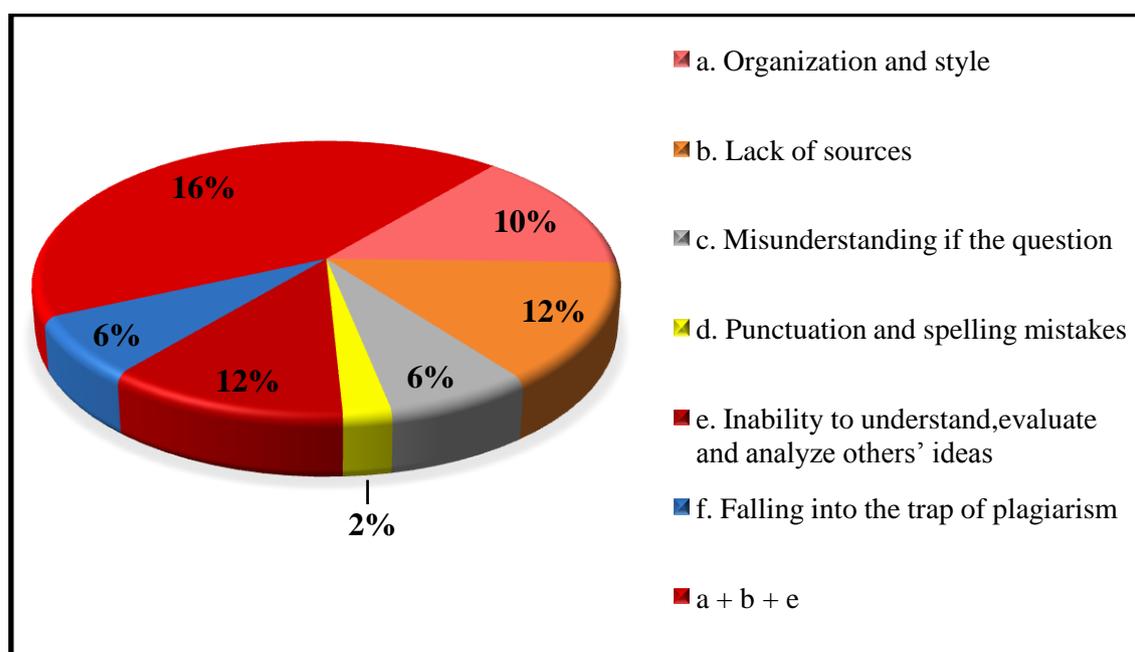


**Graph 3.18 Kinds of Difficulties Faced by Students When Writing Academically**

This sub-question sought to investigate the learners' types of difficulties they usually face when writing their academic papers. Following the above rates, the participants confronted different difficulties. Initially, 12% of the respondents reported that they face challenges in terms of organization and style, while other 12% claimed that the lack of sources makes academic writing a hard task for them. Additionally, equally to those who claimed that misunderstanding of the question is their frequent problem, other 6% claimed that plagiarism is the obstacle which affects the value of their academic papers. However, only 2% state that punctuation and spelling are their main problem when they write academically. 10% of the respondents revealed that the inability to understand, evaluate and analyze others' ideas is their common challenging problem. Finally, the majority of them (16%) argued that both organization and style and lack of sources, in addition to the inability to understand an analyze others ideas are the common difficulties that they usually face when writing academic papers.

**Q 15:** In your opinion, what are the features of a good academic paper?

**Table 3.19 Features of Academic Writing**

| Features | Number of Students | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| **a. The use of formal language with correct grammar, punctuation and spelling.** | 9 | 18% |
| **b. The paper which is referenced correctly.** | 4 | 8% |
| **c. The paper that shows the writers' understanding and the ability to interpret and answer the questions.** | 7 | 14% |
| **d. All of them** | 30 | 60% |
| **Total** | 50 | 100% |
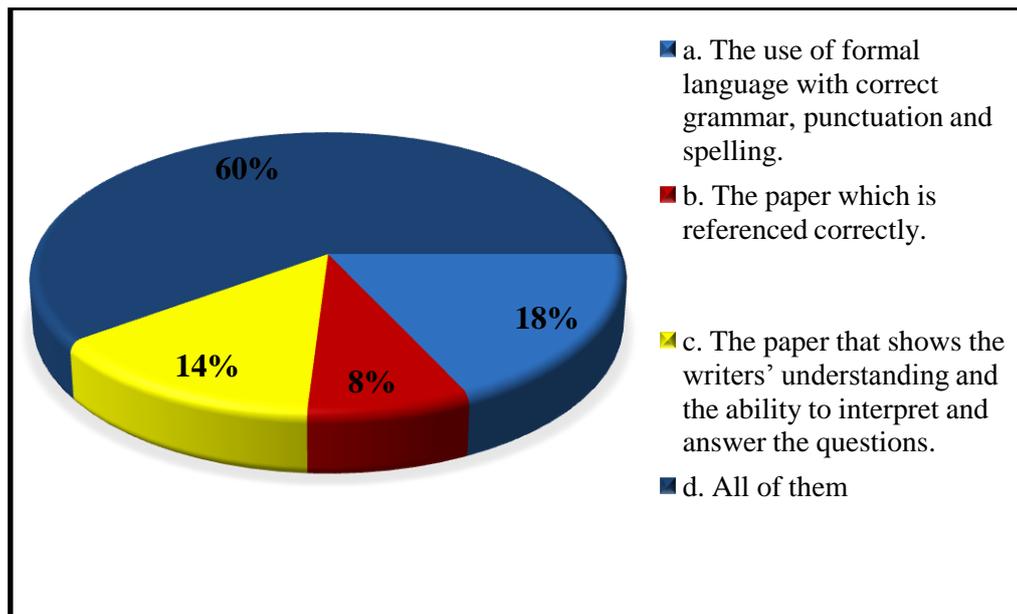
**Graph 3.19 Features of Academic Writing**

The results above demonstrate the different features which characterize good academic paper. This question was asked to determine how participants view good academic papers. As it can be noticed, 18% of the students agreed that the use of formal language with correct grammar, punctuation and spelling is the key feature of good academic papers. While, only 8% claimed that a good academic paper is the one which is well referenced. Furthermore, 14% of the learners thought that if writers show a kind of understanding and ability to interpret and answer the question, their academic papers would be considered as good. Conversely, the majority of them (60%) reported that any academic paper should comprise all the above features in order to say that it is a good academic paper.

**Q 16:** In your opinion, is there a relationship between academic writing and critical thinking**?**

**Table 3.20 Students' Perception about the Relationship between Academic Writing and Critical Thinking**

| Choice | Number of Students | Percentages |
|--------|--------------------|-------------|
| Yes | 45 | 90% |
| No | 5 | 10% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
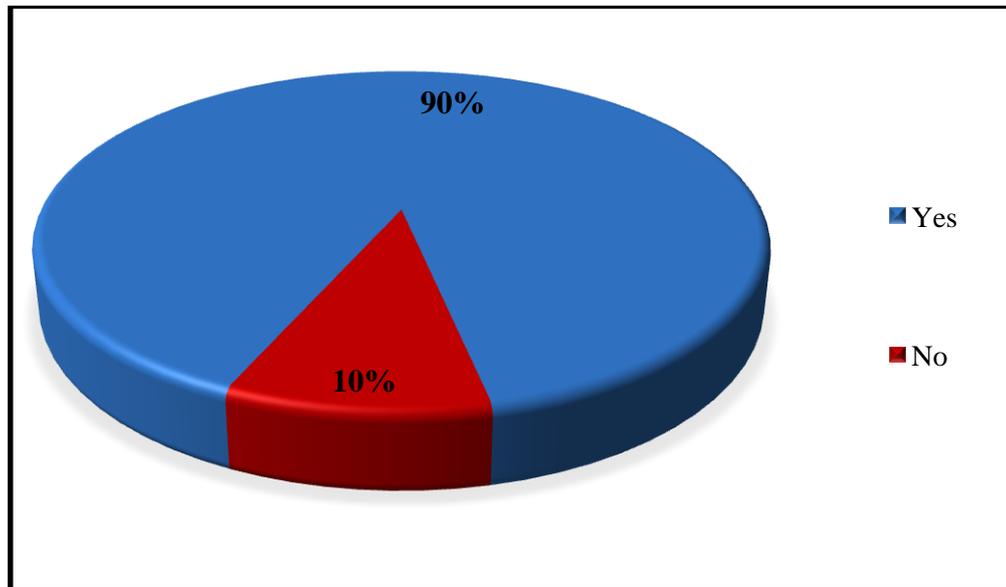


**Graph 3.20 Students' Perception about the Relationship between Academic Writing and Critical Thinking**

The table and the graph identify wither or not the students believe that there is a relationship between academic writing and critical thinking. As the rates show, the majority of the participants (90%) believed that both academic writing and critical thinking are interrelated. On the contrary, only five respondents representing 10% revealed that there is no relationship between the two issues.

**Q 16.1:** If yes, which one affects the other?

**Table 3.21 Students' Perceptions about the Kind of the Relationship that Exists between Academic Writing and Critical Thinking**

| Kind of Relation | Number of Students | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| a. Critical thinking affects academic writing. | 25 | 50% |
| b. Academic writing affects critical thinking. | 1 | 2% |
| c. They affect each other. | 19 | 38% |
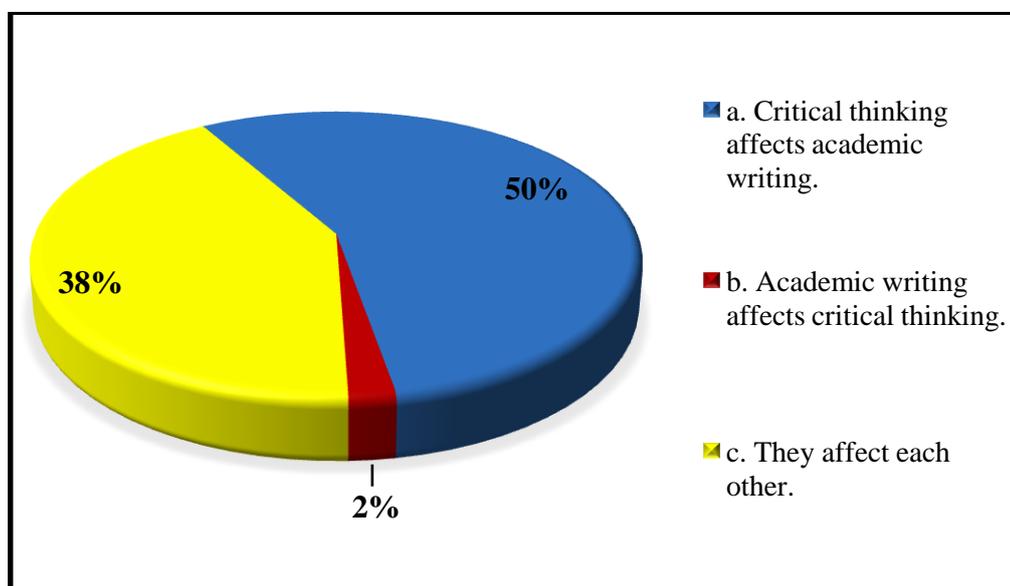


**Graph 3.21 Students' Perceptions about the Kind of the Relationship that Exists between Academic Writing and Critical Thinking**

This sub- question sought to discover how do the participants view the relationship between academic writing and critical thinking. It can be noticed from the results that the highest percentage which is 50% represents the students who claimed that critical thinking affects academic writing. They assume that critical thinking skill assists them to critically examine and understand the question and others ideas, and thus write effective academic

papers. However, only 2% claimed that academic writing is the one which affects critical thinking. The rest of the students (38%) believe that the two issues affect each other.

**Q 17:** Which stage (s) does critical thinking affect (s) in academic writing?

**Table 3.22 Stages Affected by Critical Thinking in Academic Writing**

| Stages | Number of Students | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| a. Thinking stage | 8 | 16% |
| b. Research stage | 5 | 10% |
| c. Outline stage | 4 | 8% |
| d. Drafting stage | 8 | 16% |
| e. Revising stage | 0 | 0% |
| f. Editing stage | 0 | 0% |
| a + b + c + d | 25 | 50% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
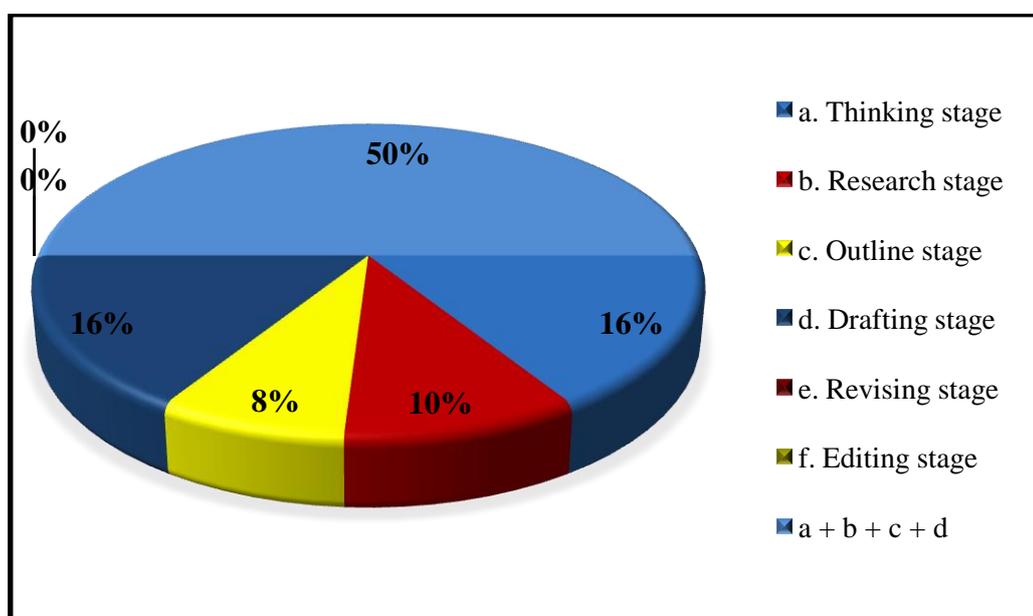


**Graph 3.22 Stages Affected by Critical Thinking in Academic Writing**

In this question we asked the students to choose the stages which they think are mostly affected by critical thinking. The results show that the participants have different views. On one hand, some of them think that critical thinking affects only one stage in academic writing. In this respect, 16% claimed that critical thinking affects only the thinking stage, while other 16% claimed that the drafting stage is the mostly affected stage in academic writing by the issue of critical thinking. Besides, 8% believe that critical thinking affects the outlining stage, yet none of them thought that critical thinking can affect the revising and editing stages. On the other hand, some of the respondents think that critical thinking affects many stages. Therefore, the majority (50%) revealed that critical thinking influences four stages which are: thinking, research, outlining and drafting stages.

**Q 18:** Do you think that critical thinking can eliminate the problems that EFL students face when writing their academic papers?

**Table 3.23 Students' Perceptions about the Usefulness of Critical Thinking in Eliminating Academic Writing Problems**

| Choice | Number of Students | Percentages |
|--------|--------------------|-------------|
| Yes    | 32                 | 64%         |
| No     | 18                 | 36%         |
| Total  | 50                 | 100%        |
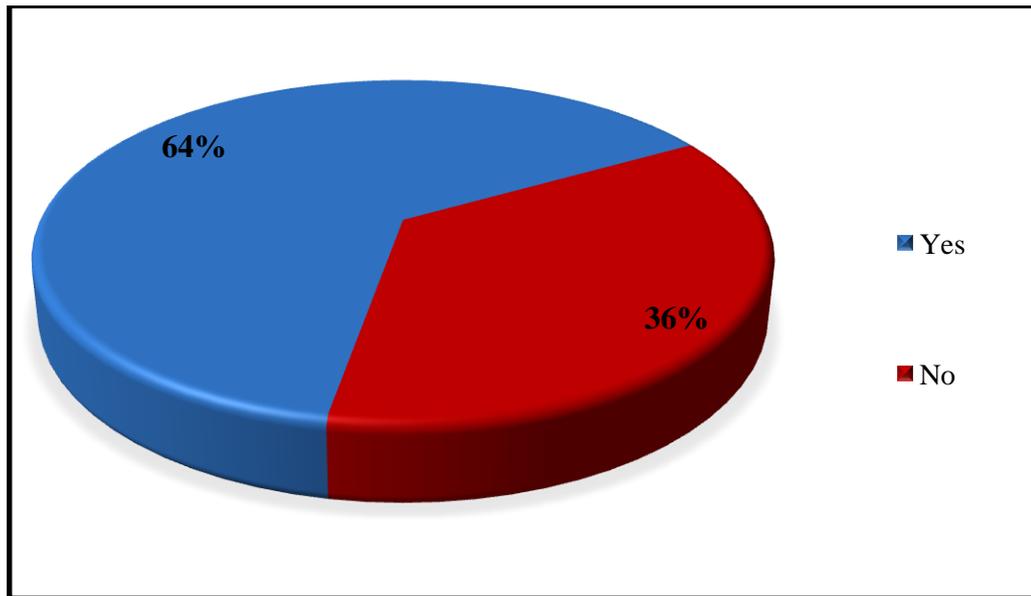
**Graph 3.23 Students' Perceptions about the Usefulness of Critical Thinking in Eliminating Academic Writing Problems**

The table and the graph above identify whether or not the participants believe that critical thinking can eliminate their problems as students in academic writing. As the rates show, the majority of the students (64%) believe that critical thinking can eliminate the difficulties and problems faced by students in academic writing. Whereas, eighteen students representing (36%) claimed that students' problems in academic writing cannot be eliminated only by critical thinking.

**Q 18.1:** If yes how?

This sub-question was posed to obtain more information about the respondents' perceptions of the usefulness of critical thinking in academic writing. The students were asked to explain how critical thinking can eliminate students' problems in academic writing. The majority asserted that thinking deeply indicates what is appropriate and what is academic to be included. Furthermore, they reported that critical thinking would help students to produce better judgments about the topics they have in hand. Finally, some of

the students reported that if students become good critical thinkers, they would be able to produce precise, concise, and persuasive papers.

## 3.3 Teachers' Questionnaire

### 3.3.1 Aim of the Teachers' Questionnaire

The purpose of the teachers' questionnaire was to investigate and collect the teachers' opinions and perceptions about the importance of critical thinking in enhancing EFL students' academic writing. It is also intended to check whether critical thinking is a part of the learning process or not. More importantly, the questionnaire attempted to identify the observable outcomes of the teachers concerning the students' level in academic writing and their level as critical thinkers.

### 3.3.2 Description of the Teachers' Questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire was composed mainly of tree (3) sections. The first section aimed at gathering background information about teachers concerning their qualifications, experience and the level of their students in English. The second section includes questions which aimed to determine the teachers' perceptions of the concept of critical thinking and the use of this issue in EFL classes. The third section involves questions about academic writing and the teachers' perceptions of the importance of critical thinking especially in relation to academic writing. Moreover, the questionnaire included sixteen (16) main questions and nine (9) sub-questions as it was varied. That is to say, it included both open ended and close ended questions.

### 3.3.3 Administration of the Teachers' Questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed to twelve (12) teachers at Mohammed Khider University of Biskra: some teach academic writing while others teach different courses. The questionnaire has been submitted to some teachers who were present at the university, and

others have received the questionnaire on facebook which result in a good amount of interaction.

### 3.3.4 Analysis of the Teachers' Questionnaire

**Section One: Background Information**

**Q 01:** Would you please specify your educational qualification?

**Table 3.24 Teachers' Educational Qualifications**

| Educational Qualification | Number of Teachers | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| a. Master | 4 | 33% |
| b. Magister | 3 | 25% |
| c. PHD | 5 | 42% |
| Total | 12 | 100% |
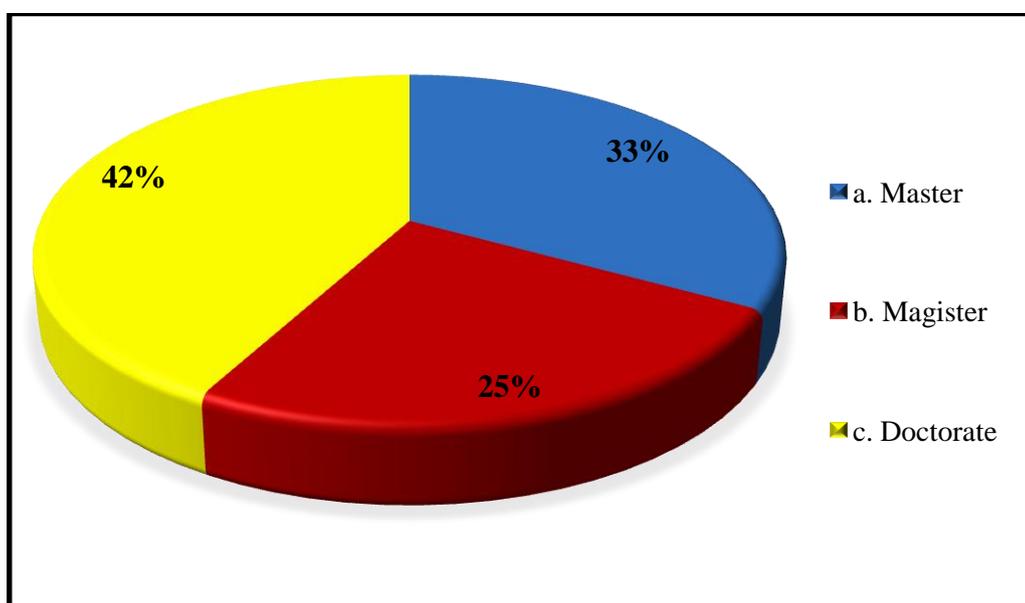


**Graph 3.24 Teachers' Educational Qualification**

This question was asked to identify the teachers' qualifications. As it can be seen in the table and the graph above, 33% of the twelve teachers have master degree which indicates that they are beginners in the field of teaching. In addition, 25% of those teachers

71

asserted that they held a Magister degree; while the majority (42%) reported that they have

PHD (Doctorate degree). It can be concluded that most EFL teachers at Biskra University

are of an advanced level as the majority either held the PHD degree or Master degree.

**Q 02:** How many years have you been teaching English?

**Table 3.25 Teachers' Experience in Teaching English**

| Years | Number of teachers | Percentages |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 – 5 years | 6 | 50% |
| 5 – 10 years | 3 | 25% |
| More than 10 | 3 | 25% |
| Total | 12 | 100% |
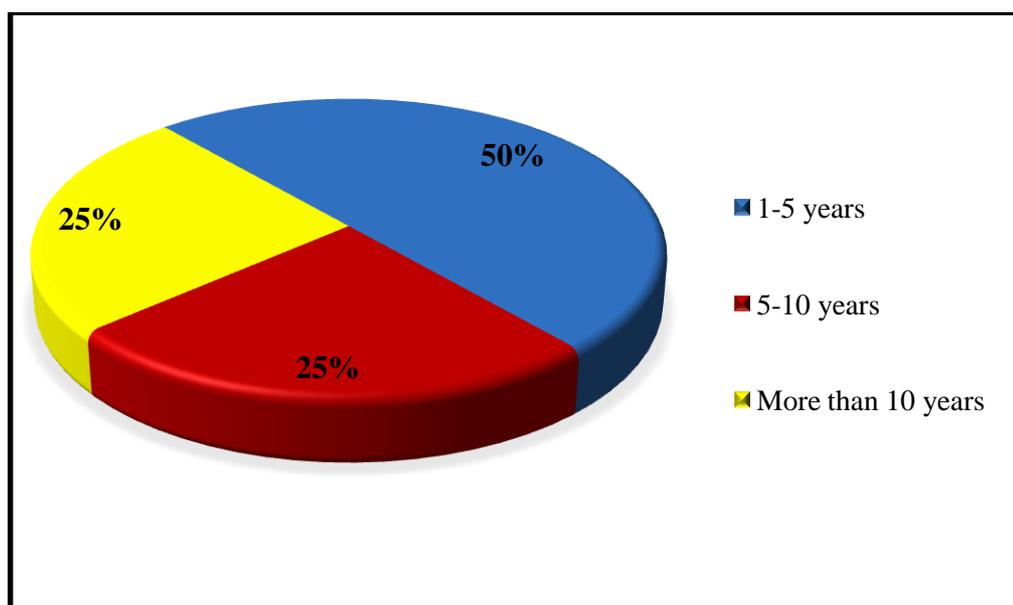


**Graph 3.25 Teachers' Experience in Teaching English**

Regarding this question, its aim was to identify the teaching experience of the EFL

teachers at Mohamed Khider University. Accordingly, as the results show, the majority of

teachers (50%) reported that they have been teaching English for more than five years.

However, 25% claimed that their teaching experience is trapped between five to ten (5-10)

years. Equally, 25% of teachers asserted that they have been teaching English for more than ten years. Thus, the results reveal that teachers at Biskra University are experienced.

**Q 03:** Have you taught Master One students before?

**Table 3.26 Teachers' Experience in Teaching Master One Students**

| Choice | Number of teachers | Percentages |
|--------|--------------------|-------------|
| Yes | 8 | 67% |
| No | 4 | 33% |
| Total | 12 | 100% |
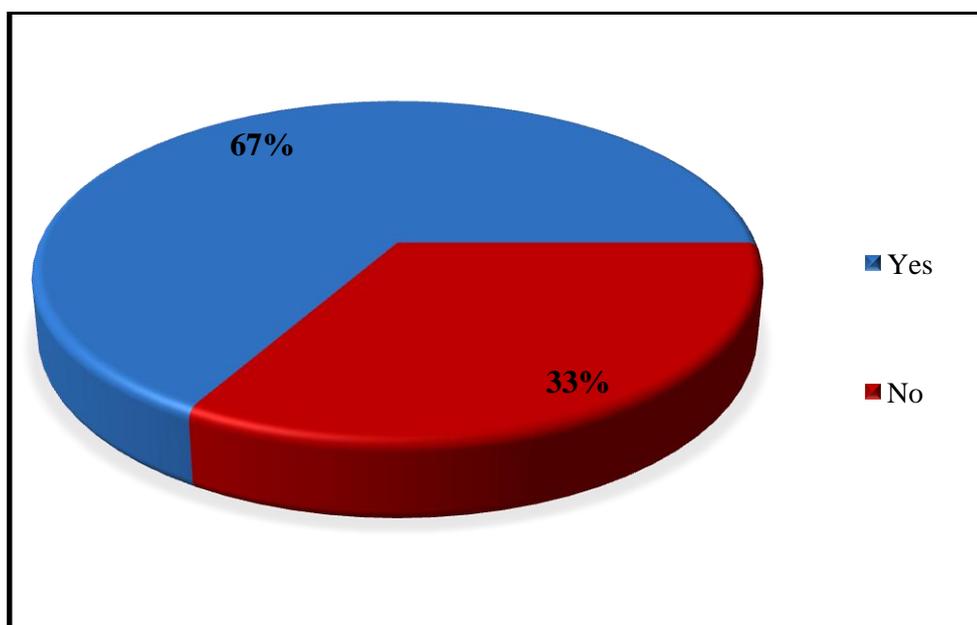


**Graph 3.26 Teachers' Experience in Teaching Master One Students**

In this question we asked teachers if they have taught Master One students because our investigation is concerned with this category of students. The table and the graph above show that the majority of teachers (67%) stated that they have taught Master One students before. Thus, it can be said that the majority of teachers have an experience in teaching Master One students.

**Q3.1:** If yes, how do you perceive their level?

**Table 3.27 Teachers' Perceptions about Master One Students' Level in English**

| Level | Number of teachers | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| a. Good | 1 | 8% |
| b. Average | 8 | 67% |
| c. Weak | 3 | 25% |
| Total | 12 | 100% |
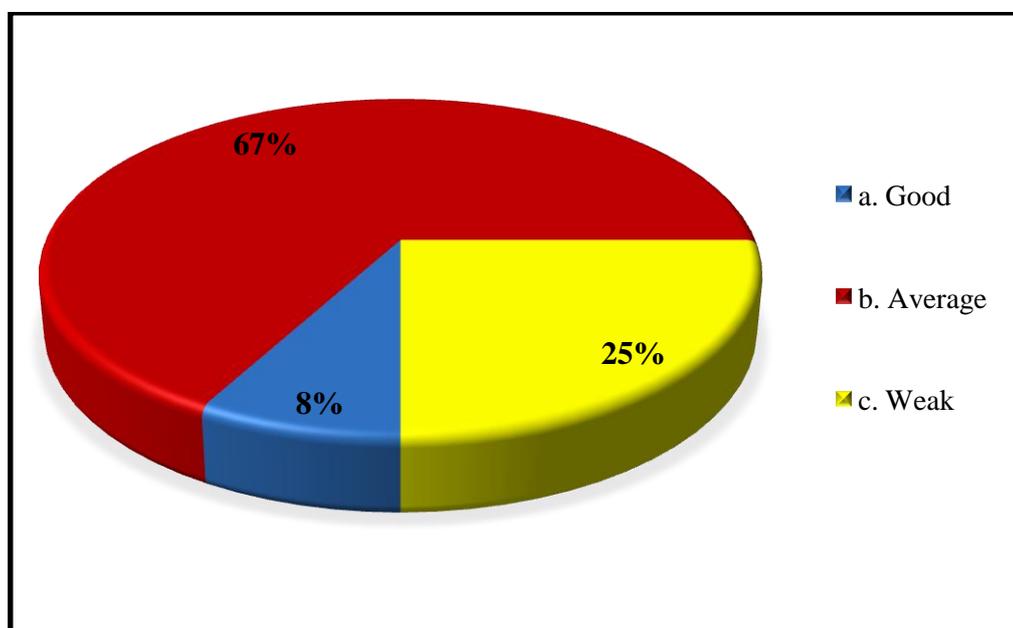
**Graph 3.27 Teachers' Perceptions about Master One Students' Level in English**

In this sub-question we sought to get a general view about the level of Master One students as learners of English. As the results reveal, only one teacher representing 8% believed that Master students at Mohammed Khider University are good learners. However, the majority of teachers (67%) indicated that they have an average level, while 25% of them asserted that Master One students are weak learners.

**Section Two: Critical Thinking**

**Q 04:** In your opinion what does the term critical thinking mean?

This question aimed to identify the teachers' views of the meaning of critical thinking. Regarding to the teachers, it is clear that they have convergent views about the meaning of critical thinking. Nine (9) teachers who represent the majority (75 %) agreed that critical thinking is a cognitive act, and it refers to the ability of analyzing and conceptualizing data, solving problems, interpreting facts, thinking deeply to understand things and searching for possible ways to accomplish tasks. Moreover, one teacher asserted that critical thinking means to make reasoned judgments that are logical and well thought out, while another teacher claimed that critical thinking means to critically analyze, evaluate and make judgments to reach objective and unbiased conclusions. Finally, the some respondents believe that critical thinking refers to the ability to know how to distinguish facts from opinions and not blindly adhering to popular opinions.

**Q 05:** Do you think that Master One students are good critical thinkers?

**Table 3.28 Teachers' Views about Their Students as Critical thinker**

| Choice | Number of teachers | Percentages |
|--------|--------------------|-------------| 
| Yes | 8 | 67% |
| No | 4 | 33% |
| Total | 12 | 100% |
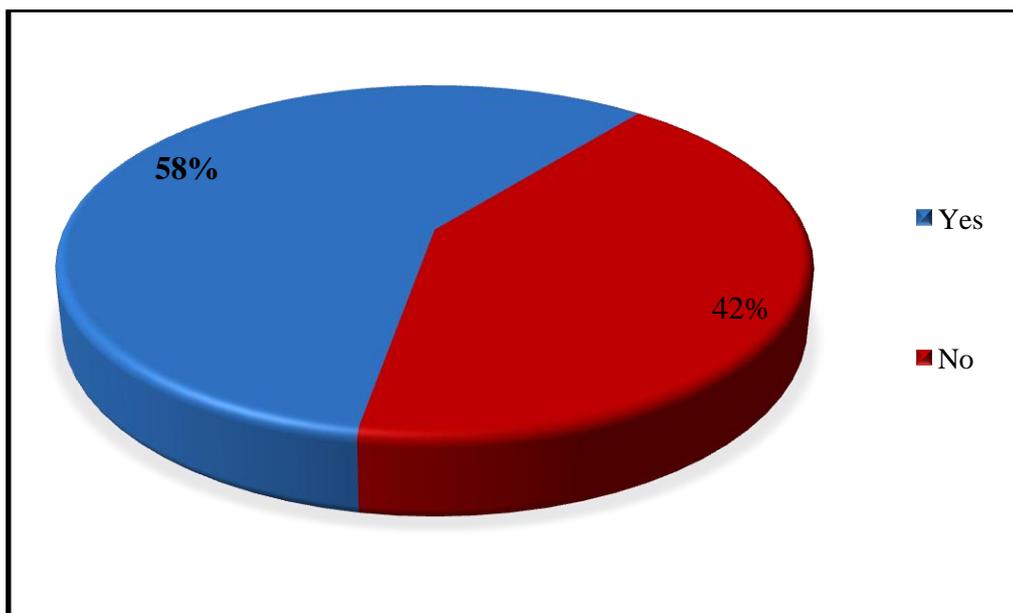
**Graph 3.28 Teachers' Views about Their Students as Critical thinker**

This question was asked to know if teachers consider their Master One students as critical thinkers or not. As the table and the graph above show, the majority of teachers (58%) reported that their students are critical thinkers, while 42% thought that their students are not really good critical thinkers.

**Q 5.1:** If yes, how can you evaluate their critical thinking abilities?

**Table 3.29 Teachers' Evaluation of Their Students' Critical Thinking Abilities**

| Choice | Number of Teachers | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| a. Good | 1 | 8% |
| b. Average | 6 | 50% |
| c. Poor | 5 | 42% |
| Total | 12 | 100% |
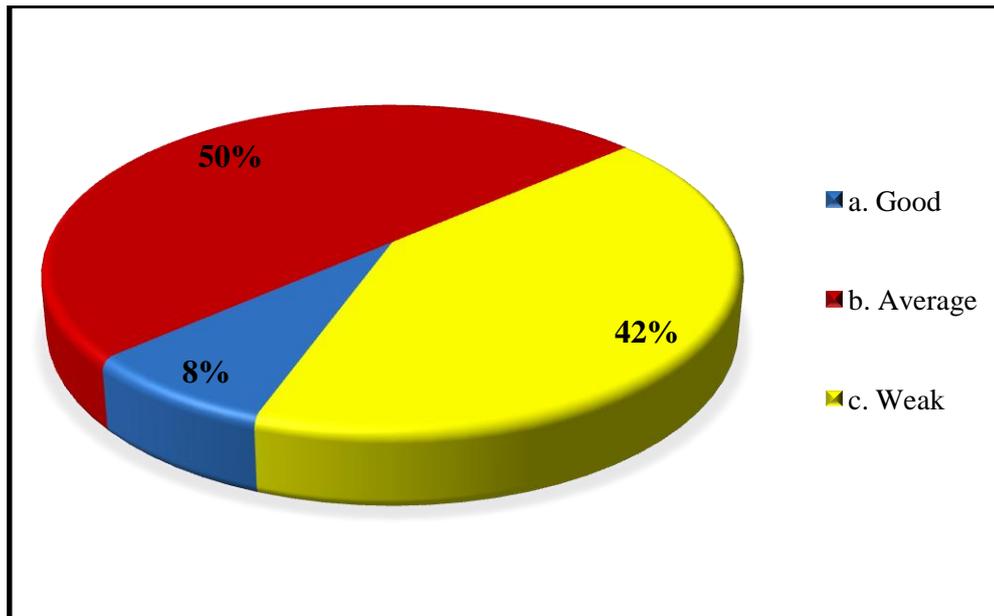
**Graph 3.29 Teachers' Evaluation of Their Students' Critical Thinking Abilities**

This sub-question was raised to know how do teachers evaluate and perceive the level and abilities of Master One students as critical thinkers. According to the data presented above, only one teacher representing 8% deems Master One students' critical thinking abilities as good. On the contrary, the majority of them (50%) view their students' critical thinking as average. Finally, 42% of teachers claimed that Master One students have poor critical thinking abilities. As a result, the majority of Master One students are either average or poor critical thinkers. In other words, they either possess the critical thinking skills, but they do not practice them, or they do not even know the critical thinking skills. Thus, critical thinking should be developed because higher education requires advanced thinking skills.

**Q 06:** Do you encourage your students to think critically?

**Table 3.30 Encouraging Students to Think Critically**

| Choice | Number of teachers | Percentages |
|--------|--------------------|-------------|
| Yes | 12 | 100% |
| No | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 12 | 100% |
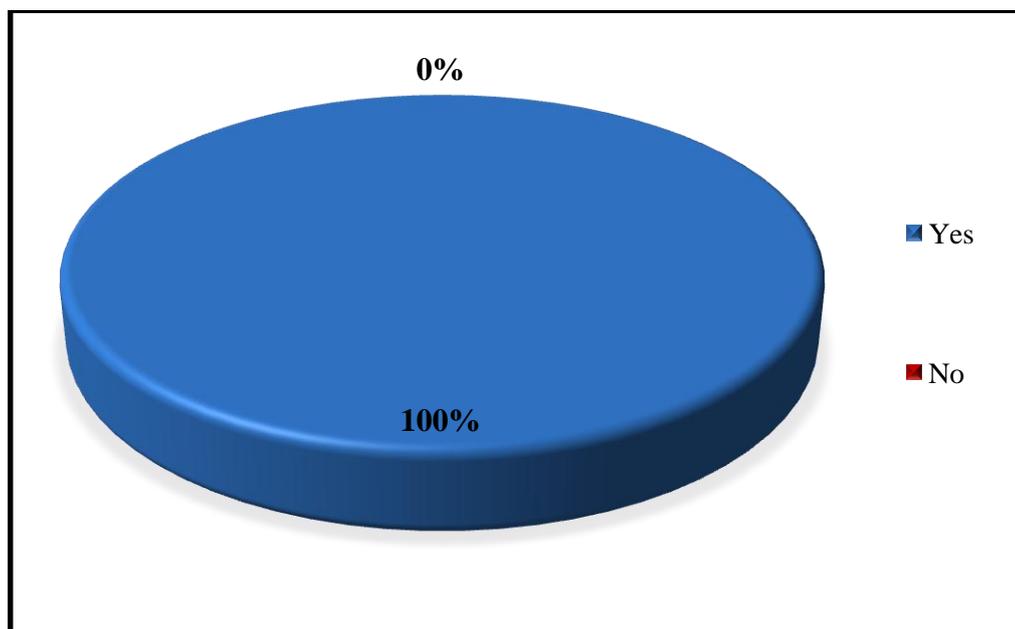


**Graph 3.30 Encouraging Students to Think Critically**

This question was asked to know whether teachers integrate the issue of critical thinking when teaching their students and if they encourage them to think critically or not. As shown in the table and the graph, all the teachers (100%) asserted that they encourage their students to think critically in order to develop higher order thinking skills.

**Q 6.1:** If yes which activity (ies) do you think are better to improve the students' critical thinking skills?

**Table 3.31 Activities for Improving Students' Critical Thinking Skills**

| Activity | Number of teachers | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| a. Written assignments | 0 | 0% |
| b. Classroom discussion | 1 | 8.33% |
| C. Question/ Answer interaction | 1 | 8.33% |
| d. Reading texts | 0 | 0% |
| e. All of them | 3 | 25% |
| a+ b | 1 | 8.33% |
| a + c | 4 | 33.34% |
| a + d | 1 | 8.33% |
| b + c + d | 1 | 8.33% |
| Total | 12 | 100% |
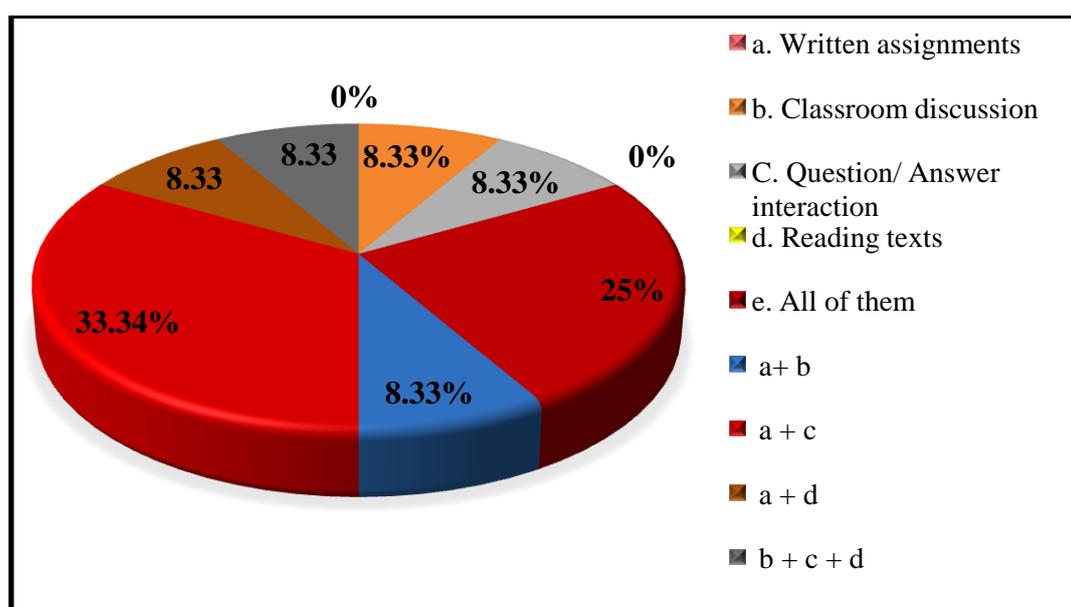


**Graph 3.31 Activities for Improving Students' Critical Thinking Skills**

In this sub-question we sought to know what are the common ways that teachers think are better to improve the students' critical thinking. The results above show that teachers use different ways to improve their students' critical thinking. Some teachers believe that one activity is enough to encourage students to think critically. In this respect, some teachers (8.33%) claimed that critical thinking could be better ameliorated through classroom discussion, while other 8.33% claimed that question/ answer interaction is the best activity for improving critical thinking. However, none of them thought that the use of written assignments or reading texts can better improve students' critical thinking. Moreover, three other teachers representing 26% believed that all of the activities mentioned above are useful to develop this issue. In contrast to the above perspective, 8.33% claimed that critical thinking would be better improved if they use two activities, it is why they had chosen both written assignments and question/ answer interaction. Equally, other 8.33% had chosen written assignments with reading texts. However, the majority (33.34%) believe that critical thinking would be highly improved if they use both written assignments and question/ answer interaction. Finally, other teachers (8.33%) preferred three activities. That is why they have chosen classroom discussion, question /answer interaction and reading texts. We can deduce that written assignments is the common preferable activity between teachers.

**Q 07:** In your opinion, encouraging students to think critically should be implicitly, explicitly or both?

**Table 3.32 Teachers' Opinions of How to Encourage Students to Think Critically**

| Choice | Number of teachers | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| a. Implicitly | 2 | 17% |
| b. Explicitly | 1 | 8% |
| c. Both of them | 9 | 75% |
| Total | 12 | 100% |
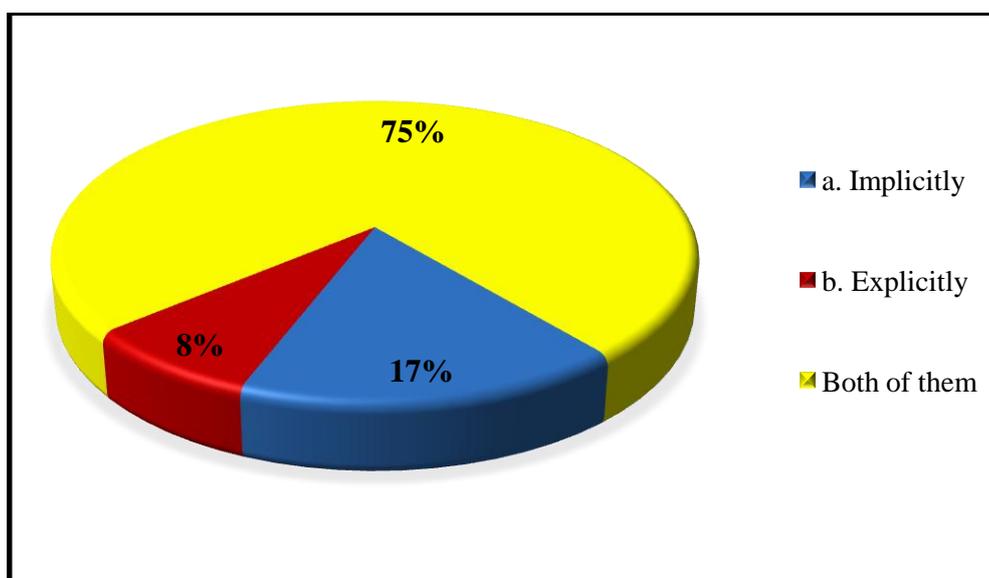


**Graph 3.32 Teachers' Opinions of How to Encourage Students to Think Critically**

This question probed the teachers' perceptions of the appropriate way for encouraging students to think critically. 17% of the teachers claimed that encouraging students to think critically should be implicitly, while only one person representing 8 % claimed that students should be explicitly encouraged to think critically. However, the majority of them (75%) believed that students should be both implicitly and explicitly encouraged to think

critically. Thus, critical thinking is an important issue that should be integrated in the teaching and learning process both implicitly and explicitly.

**Q 7.1:** Why?

This sub- question was designed to determine the reasons behind the teachers' choices in the above question. On one hand, teachers who claimed that students should be implicitly encouraged to think critically, they justified their choice saying that critical thinking needs to be a daily activity, that's why teachers need to create implicit triggers to encourage their students' natural response. They added that critical thinking has to be always present in the students' way of thinking. On the other, the teacher who claimed that encouraging students to think critically should be explicitly did not justify his choice. Moreover, the teachers who ¨preferred both ways (implicitly and explicitly) to encourage their students to think critically, they justified their view stating that encouraging students to think critically should be implicit in order to foster their disposition to seek truth and it should be explicit in order to help them to learn from their experiences.

**Q 08:** Teaching critical thinking skills in EFL classes is it: very important, important or less important?

**Table3.33 Importance of Teaching Critical Thinking Skills in EFL Classes**

| Choice | Number of teachers | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| a. Very important | 9 | 75% |
| b. Important | 3 | 25% |
| c. less important | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 12 | 100% |
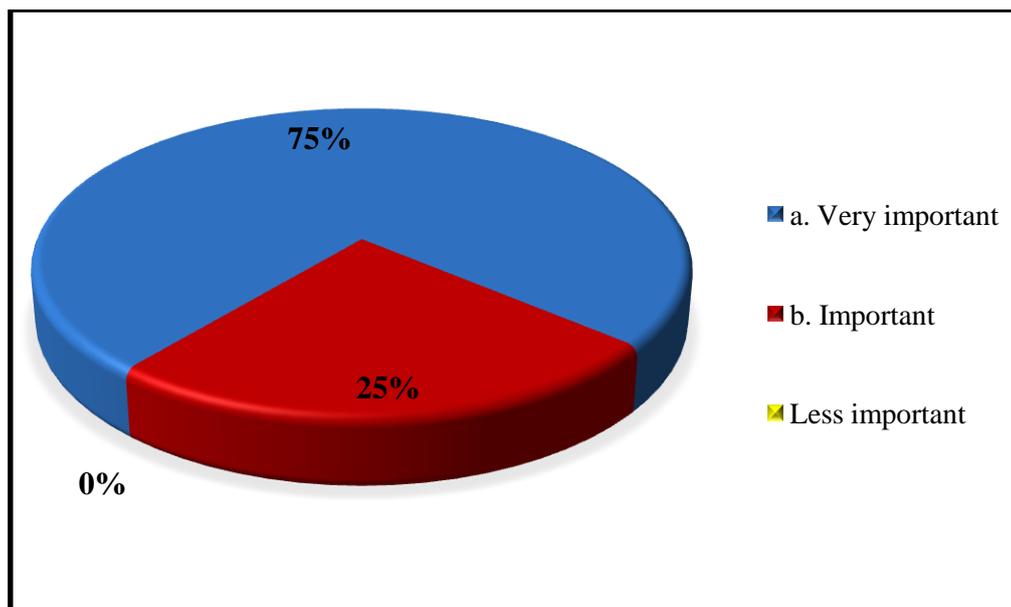
**Graph 3.33 Importance of Teaching Critical Thinking Skills in EFL Classes**

In this question, we aimed at identifying the extent of importance of teaching critical thinking in EFL classes. Referring back to the above results, the majority of teachers (75%) claimed that critical thinking skills is a very important issue that must be taught in EFL classes, while only three teachers representing 25% consider that critical thinking skills as just an important issue but not highly. However, none of them thought that teaching critical thinking skills in the EFL classes is not important.

**Q 8.1:** Justify please?

In this sub-question we asked the teachers to justify their above choices concerning the importance of teaching critical thinking skills in EFL classes. It was designed to know why teachers think that critical thinking skills are very important or not important to get more information concerning their views of this issue. Yet, it is important to note that some teachers left their choices without justification. As all the teachers agreed on the importance of teaching critical thinking skills in EFL classes, their justifications were as follow: three (03) teachers considers critical thinking skills as an important issue because critical thinking is seen as one of the 21st century skills due to the wide spread of media

and globalization. Moreover, other two teachers justified their insistence on the importance of teaching critical thinking skills asserting that teaching critical thinking skills assist students to be autonomous, creative and insightful. They also help them to shape their character; confidence .productivity and knowledge. Finally the rest of teachers insist on the importance and the need for teaching critical thinking skills because they enable students to improve themselves not only in the field of academia, but also to be ready for future life career.

**Section Three: Academic Writing**

**Q 09:** Do you think that the time devoted to academic writing course is enough?

**Table 3.34 Teachers' Satisfaction about the Time Devoted to Academic Writing**

| Choice | Number of Teachers | Percentages |
|--------|--------------------|-------------|
| Yes    | 1                  | 8%          |
| No     | 11                 | 92%         |
| Total  | 12                 | 100%        |
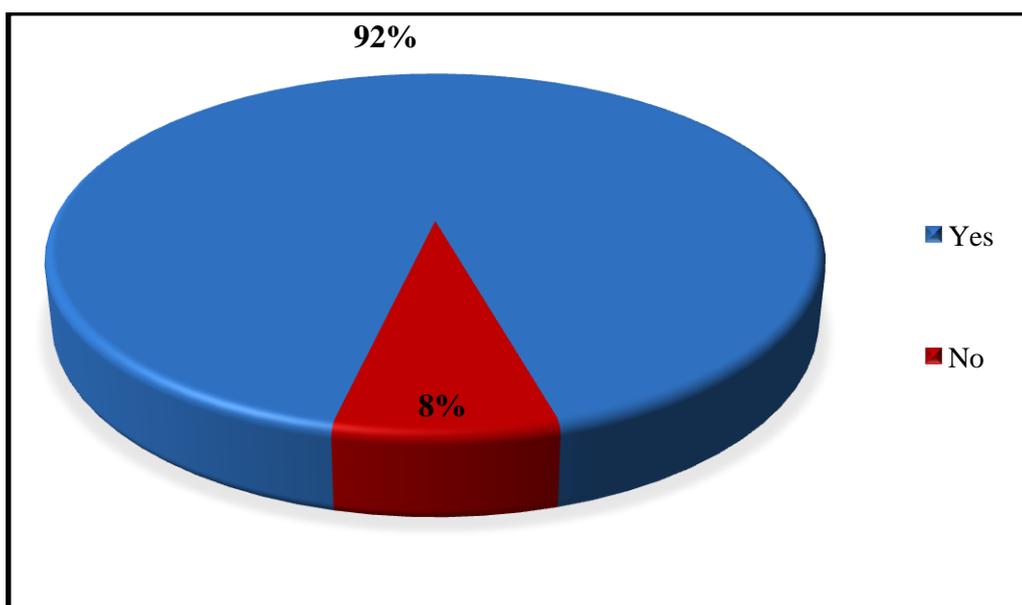


**Graph 3.34 Teachers' Satisfaction about the Time Devoted to Academic Writing**

Regarding this question, its purpose was to know whether or not the time allocated for teaching academic writing is sufficient from the prospective of teachers. As it can be seen in the table and the graph above, the majority of teachers agree that the time devoted to teaching academic writing is not enough. Conversely, only one teacher claimed that the time allocated to the course of academic writing is enough. Therefore, from the perspective of teachers, it can be concluded that the time devoted to teaching academic writing needs to be prolonged.

**Q 9.1:** Justify please?

In this sub-question we asked the teachers to justify their answers in the previous question. In this respect, the teachers who stated that the time devoted to academic writing was not enough justified their responses reporting that two sessions per-week are not enough. Because academic writing requires both theoretical and intensive practice since the former alone is not sufficient, in other words, students need more practice and feedback. However, the time devoted to teaching this course does not allow teachers to present the lesson, assign written production, correct them and prove effective feedback for all the students. They added that academic writing is part of research methodology which cannot be covered in one year and that it should be taught progressively. Conversely, the only person who stated that the time allocated for academic writing is enough justified this answer saying that the problem is not about the time. He stated an example of Mentouri University where students study four sessions of writing per-week, but they do not master these skills because the problem is not about time, but about the efficacy of the methods and engagement of the students.

**Q 10:** How often do you ask your students to write academic papers?

**Table 3.35 Frequency of Asking Students to Write Academic Papers**

| Frequency | Number of Teachers | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| a. Always | 0 | 0% |
| b. Often | 4 | 33.33% |
| c. Sometimes | 6 | 50% |
| d. Rarely | 1 | 8.33% |
| e. Never | 1 | 8.33% |
| Total | 12 | 100% |
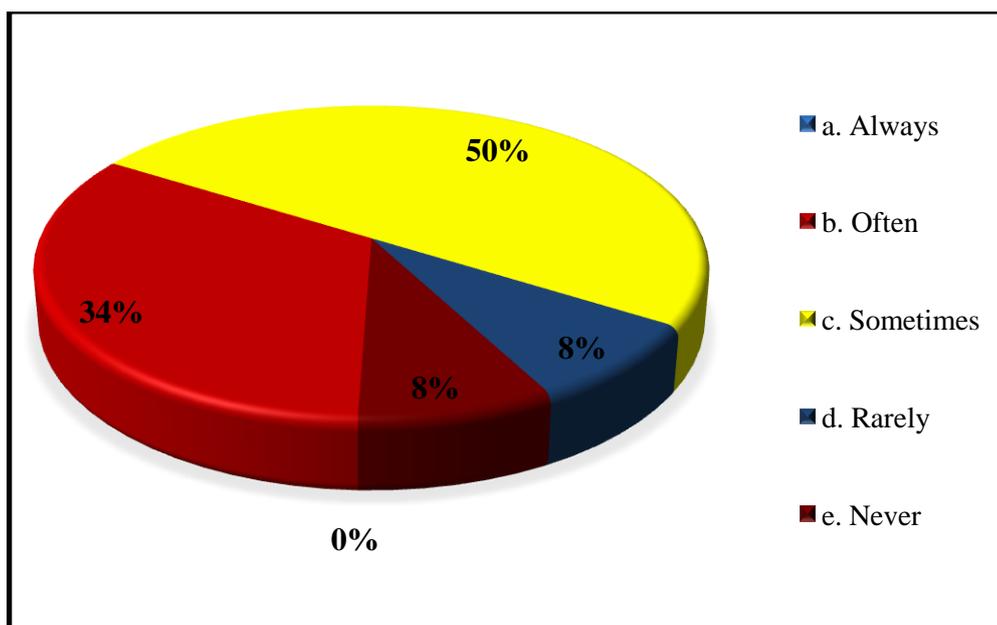


**Graph 3.35 Frequency of Asking Students to Write Academic Papers**

This question regarded the frequency of asking students to write academic papers on the part of teachers. The rates show that none of the teachers reported that s/he always asks his or her students to write academic papers and this can be due to the scarce time devoted to academic writing course. However, 34% of the respondents confirmed that they often ask their students to write academically, while the majority of them (50 %) asserted that

they sometimes ask their students to write academic papers. At last, the rest of teachers split out equally to 8 % who reported that they rarely ask their students to write academic papers and 8% who reported that they never ask their students to write academic papers. Hence, due to the lack of practice, students' academic writing did not improve, because the nature of this issue is practical.

**Q 11:** Is there a relationship between academic writing and critical thinking?

**Table 3.36 Teachers' Views about the Relationship between Academic Writing and Critical Thinking**

| Choice | Number of Teachers | Percentages |
|--------|--------------------|-------------|
| Yes | 11 | 92% |
| No | 1 | 8% |
| Total | 12 | 100% |
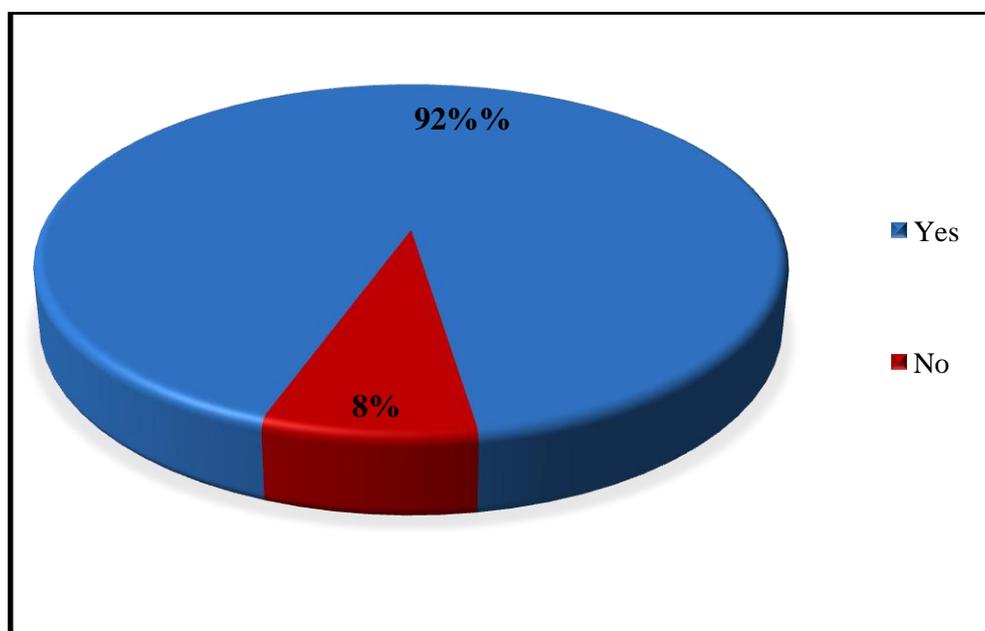


**Graph 3.36 Teachers' Views about the Relationship between Academic Writing and Critical Thinking**

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This question sought to investigate the teachers' perceptions of the relationship between academic writing and critical thinking. Subsequently, as it can be noticed from the table and the graph above, the highest percentage of teachers (92 %) agreed on the relationship between academic writing and critical thinking, while only 8 % claimed that there is no relationship between the two items.

**Q 11.1:** If yes what kind of relationship exists between them?

This sub-question was designed to determine the nature of the relationship between academic writing and critical thinking, and which one affects the other more from the teachers' perspective. In this respect the majority of teachers asserted that critical thinking is the one which affects academic writing and they provided us with the following justifications. Some teachers asserted that good critical thinkers write better academic papers as they are able to generate relevant ideas, organize them and choose appropriate vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and spelling. Others stated that academic writing is the voice of critical thinking, in other words, if students are good critical thinkers, this will appear in their written production and vice versa. Therefore, what can be deduced from the teachers' responses is that effective academic writing starts with effective critical thinking skills.

**Q 12:** Do you think that the students' academic writing could be ameliorated if they apply the critical thinking skills?

**Table 3.37 Teachers' Perceptions about the Usefulness of Critical Thinking Skills in Ameliorating Students' Academic Writing**

| Choice | Number of Teachers | Percentages |
|--------|-------------------|-------------|
| Yes | 12 | 100% |
| No | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 12 | 100% |
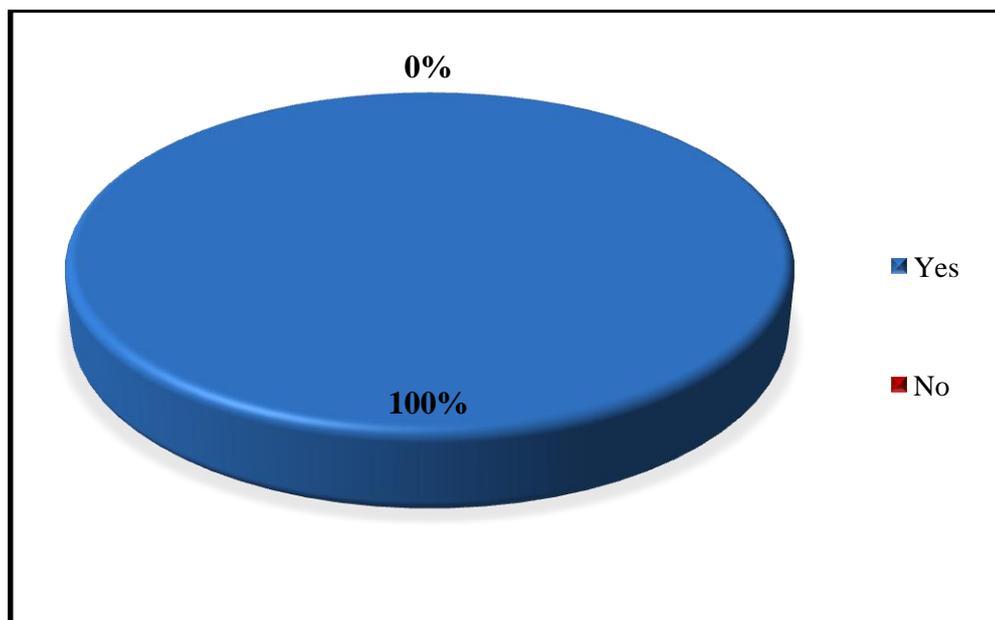


**Graph 3.37 Teachers' Perceptions about the Usefulness of Critical Thinking Skills in Ameliorating Students' Academic Writing**

Referring back to the above rates, all the teachers (100%) asserted that if students become critical thinkers their academic writing would be surely ameliorated. Thus, it is essential for students to have good critical thinking skills to examine, question, evaluate and analyze the information in order to make sense of their academic papers.

**Q 12.1:** If yes how?

This sub-question sought to clarify and gather more information concerning the usefulness of critical thinking in improving students' academic writing from the teachers' point of view. Accordingly, the respondents' views were as follow:  if students apply the critical thinking skills when writing academically their ideas will be better selected, developed and organized. Citing will be more relevant and adequate, the composition as a whole will be more coherent and cohesive and, thus writing will be more correct, precise and concise. They also reported that when the students think critically they will not  write everything, but rather tackle their assignment from specific angels and thoughtful perspective, because they are not collecting data but they are analyzing, evaluating and judging ideas from a logical point of view. Therefore, critical thinking skills support, enhance and enrich the students' academic writing as they refresh their level of maturity.

**Q 13:** In which stage (s) may students need effective critical thinking skills?

**Table 3.38 Stages Affected by Critical Thinking in Academic Writing**

| Stages | Number of Teachers | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| a. Thinking stage | 0 | 0% |
| b. Research stage | 0 | 0% |
| c. Outlining stage | 0 | 0% |
| d. Drafting stage | 0 | 0% |
| e. Revising stage | 0 | 0% |
| f. Editing stage | 0 | 0% |
| g. All of them | 10 | 83.33% |
| a + b | 1 | 8.33% |
| a + d + e | 1 | 8.33% |
| Total | 12 | 100% |
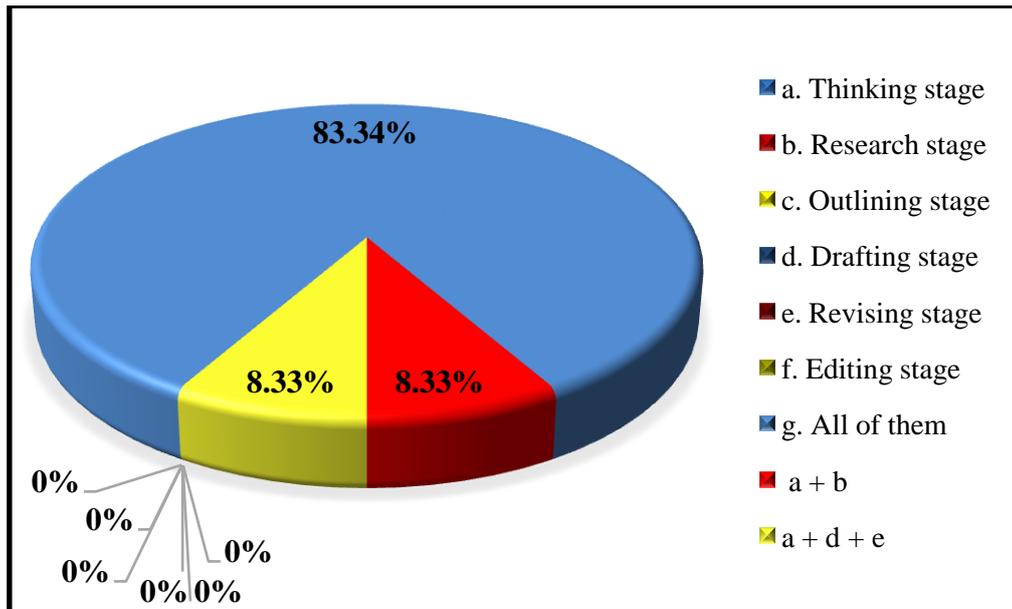
**Graph 3.38 Stages Affected by Critical Thinking in Academic Writing**

In this question we asked the teachers to pinpoint the stages in which critical thinking mostly occurs. The findings show that none of the twelve teachers claimed that critical thinking occurs in only one stage, thus, none of them have chosen thinking, research, outlining, drafting, editing or revising stage. On the contrary, the majority of them (84%) admitted that critical thinking is needed in all the above mentioned stages. For the rest of the teachers, they were divided equally to: 8 % of them believed that critical thinking mostly occurs in both thinking and research stages, while other 8% claimed that critical thinking is needed in three stages which are : thinking, editing and revising stages. Therefore, from the responses of teachers, we can conclude that critical thinking is required in academic writing from the beginning to the end. It is needed when choosing the topic, when organizing ideas, when reporting, analyzing and commenting on others' ideas as well as when drawing conclusions in addition to revising and editing.

### 3.4 Discussion of the Results

To review the main purpose of the present study was to investigate the importance of critical thinking in enhancing EFL students' academic writing. It is aimed to assist learners to exceed the difficulties which face them when writing their academic papers and reduce the amount of poor academic papers. Moreover, the study sought to bring the students' attention to the importance and necessity of mastering the critical thinking skills, because they are required to demonstrate and show them in their academic papers in form of persuasive arguments. Simultaneously, it intended to raise the teachers' attention to the need of teaching and motivating students to think critically in order to become good critical thinkers and, accordingly good writers.

The findings that have been drawn from the analysis of the students and teachers questionnaires were positive in many aspects. On one hand, the learners' questionnaire revealed that the majority of students are familiar with the concept of critical thinking, as they are aware about its importance in both academic requirements and daily life. However, most of them admit that they do not know the critical thinking skills and they are not aware whether they are critical thinkers or not.

Furthermore, the results show that the majority of students agreed that organization and style, lack of sources, inability to understand, evaluate and analyze others' ideas represents the basic problems that face them when writing their academic papers. This is due to the lack of both critical thinking skills and practice in writing. Therefore, it is important to draw inclusive activities to improve students' critical thinking skills and thus academic writing. Finally, what can be concluded from the learners' questionnaire is that the majority of learners agreed that their academic papers will be ameliorated if they apply critical thinking skills because of the strong relationship that exists between them. Hence, good critical thinkers are good writers.

In the other hand, likewise the students' questionnaire, the teachers' questionnaire also revealed that the majority of teachers agreed on the importance of critical thinking in academic writing. Moreover, the majority of them reported that they actually incorporate the issue of critical thinking into EFL classes, and this in itself is one of the main objectives of this study which is to draw the teachers' attention to the significance of integrating critical thinking in the teaching- learning process. Besides, the findings suggest that students should be both explicitly and implicitly encouraged to think critically. That is, teachers should use a variety of activities, so that their students do not get bored and at the same time they learn and practice the critical thinking skills.

The teachers' questionnaire had also revealed that the majority of teachers are not satisfied with the time devoted to the course of academic writing. The latter is considered as a factor that influences the students' progression in academic writing. Additionally, the results obtained from the teachers' questionnaire indicate that the majority of teachers agreed on the stable relationship between academic writing and critical thinking and on the importance of critical thinking in enhancing students' academic writing.

In summary, with reference to the present study results, it can be deduced that critical thinking has a positive effect on the students' academic writing. Therefore, we can say that the findings have confirmed the hypothesis that the current study is based on.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the field work of this present study. First of all, we have reviewed the methodology that has been adopted in this study and the research tool that has been used to collect data. In addition, the data that have been gathered from both Master One EFL students and teachers' questionnaire were analyzed descriptively, and discussed thoroughly in the last section of the chapter. Additionally, the analysis of the two

questionnaires provided us with different views and perceptions concerning the importance of critical thinking in enhancing EF students' academic writing. Consequently, it can be concluded that this chapter reported positive results.

**General Conclusion**

Mastering critical thinking skills is one of the main priorities for English language learners, because it is considered to be necessary to succeed at University level. Indeed, the focus is not on the students' ability to memorize things, but rather on their ability to analyze, judge, evaluate and make decisions or solving problems like in academic writing. It is not possible to expect from students who lack these skills to come up with good academic papers. For this reason, the present study was conducted to investigate the significance of critical thinking in enhancing students' academic writing.

Making students aware about the importance of critical thinking is one of the main purposes of this study. To achieve this objective we opted for a qualitative research approach. Furthermore, in order to validate our hypothesis two questionnaires have been used as a data gathering tool: one for Master One EFL students and the other for teachers of English at Mohammed Khider University of Biskra. The obtained results revealed that both teachers and students agreed that critical thinking skills are highly required for better interpretation, evaluation and analysis of sources and making conclusions in academic writing.

However, although students showed their interest and awareness about the importance of critical thinking, this issue is still ignored and has not yet attracted the expected amount of attention in terms of practice, and this might be due to the lack of motivation. That is why students admitted that they do not know if they are critical thinkers or not, and that they encounter difficulties when writing their academic papers. Therefore, it is important to raise the students' motivation and engage them repetitively into thinking activities to reinforce their critical thinking abilities. In addition, teachers should ask them to write academic papers frequently to overcome their difficulties and for the betterment of their academic writing.

Despite the fact that the present study has achieved its aims, it is important to highlight that there were some difficulties and limitations especially concerning time. At the beginning of our study time was not a problem, but afterwards and due to the wildcat strike of students the circumstances had changed. It took much time (more than three weeks) to distribute the students' questionnaire because the majority of students were not available. Additionally, some teachers refused to answer the questionnaire that we have submitted to them. This coerced us to produce an online questionnaire, post it on facebook and waited about a week till they answered it.

On the whole, in view of the findings we can conclude that critical thinking contributes in the improvement and betterment of students' academic writing, and accordingly we can deduce that our hypothesis has been confirmed.

**General Recommendations**

**For teachers**

➢ Promoting students' critical thinking should be one of the teachers' priorities.

➢ Since teachers are not satisfied with the time allotted to the course of academic writing, they should assign homework to their students.

➢ Teachers are required to be creative in order to provide motivating environment for their students to think critically.

➢ The majority of students are not aware about the critical thinking skills, thus teachers should teach them about the critical thinking skills in early stages and encourage them to practice these skills.

**For students**

➢ Students are required to be active and enthusiastic to practice the critical thinking skills inside and outside the classroom to develop their thinking abilities.

- ➢ Students should take initiative and be independent to elaborate academic writing.

- ➢ It is important to be exposed to activities where higher order thinking skills are needed.

- ➢ Students should be aware about the stylistic conventions of academic writing and the seriousness of plagiarism with respect to the credibility of academic papers.

**For administration**

- ➢ The insufficient time and large classes are challenges that EFL teachers still suffer from. Thus, it is recommended to teach the academic writing course from the second or third year level, because three semesters with three hours per-week are not enough to present the theoretical part, assign written production, correct them and provide effective feedback for all students.

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# Appendices

# Appendix A: Students' Questionnaire

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

MOHAMED KHIDER UNIVERSITY OF BISKRA

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

SECTION OF ENGLISH

**Master One Students' Questionnaire**

Dear master students,

We are currently conducting a research about the importance of critical thinking in enhancing students' academic writing. We would be very grateful if you take part in this questionnaire which is designed for the accomplishment of a Master dissertation. This is not a test, so there is no "right" or "wrong" answers. We are interested in your opinion on this subject. Thank you for the time you are taking to complete this questionnaire.

Please, put a tick "√" in the appropriate box and give full answers whenever necessary.

**Section One: Background Information**

**1. Gender:**  Female ☐                     Male ☐

**2. Age:** ……

**3. Your choice to study English was:**

a. Personal choice ☐

b. Imposed choice ☐

**4. How would you describe your level in English?**

a. Good ☐

b. Average ☐

c. Bad ☐

**5.You have applied for the Master Degree to:**

a. Obtain more job opportunities ☐

b. Upgrade your level in education ☐

Others …………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………......

**Section Two: Critical Thinking**

**6. Have you ever heard about the term critical thinking?**

Yes ☐                                        No ☐

➢ **If yes, what do you think it means:**

a. Thinking more deeply and avoiding blind acceptance of ideas ☐

b. Judging ideas and finding the negative and positive parts ☐

c. Being more constructive ☐

d. All of them ☐

**7. Do you think that you are a good critical thinker?**

Yes ☐                    No ☐                    Do not know ☐

➢ **If yes, which characteristic(s) of good critical thinkers do you have? (you can choose more than one option)**

a. Open-mindedness ☐

b. Willingness to engage in complex tasks ☐

c. Considers different perspectives ☐

d. Plans and thinks ahead ☐

e. All of them ☐

**8. To what extent do you think that critical thinking is important?**

a. Very important ☐

b. Important ☐

c. Less important ☐

d. Not important ☐

**9. In what way(s) do you think you can improve critical thinking? ( you can choose more than one option)**

a. Written assignments ☐

b. Classroom discussion ☐

c. Question / Answer interaction ☐

d. Reading texts ☐

Others…………………………………………………………………………………………

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**10. Do you know the critical thinking skills?**

Yes ☐                    No ☐

➢ **If yes, do you practice them in the classroom activities and assignments?**

Yes ☐                    No ☐

**Section Three: Academic Writing**

**11. How can you define academic writing?**

a. Writing that demands formal language and vocabulary ☐

b. Writing that should be organized, clear, and coherent ☐

c. Writing that involves providing evidence to support a position ☐

d. Writing that is based on critical judgements of others' ideas and

   suggesting ones' own ideas ☐

Others…………………………………………………………………………………
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**12. Do you differentiate between academic writing and other genres of writing?**

Yes ☐                                                No ☐

> **If yes state one or two differences**

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**13. How often do you write academically?**

a. Always ☐

b. Often ☐

c. Sometimes ☐

d. Rarely ☐

e. Never ☐

**14. Do you find difficulties in writing academically in English?**

Yes ☐                                                No ☐

> **If yes, what kind of difficulties do you face (you can choose more than one):**

   a. Organization and style ☐

   b. Lack of sources ☐

   c. Misunderstanding of the question ☐

   d. Punctuation and spelling mistakes ☐

   e. Inability to understand, evaluate, and analyze others' ideas ☐

f. Falling into the trap of plagiarism  ☐

**15. In your opinion, what are the features of a good academic paper?**

**(you can choose more than one option)**

a. The use of formal language with correct grammar punctuation and spelling  ☐

b. The paper which is referenced correctly  ☐

c. The paper that shows your understanding and the ability to interpret and

  answer the question  ☐

d. All of them  ☐

**16. In your opinion, is there a relationship between academic writing and critical**

**thinking?**

Yes ☐                                                No ☐

➢ **If yes, which one affects the other?**

                              Affects

a. Critical thinking ——————►Academic writing  ☐

b. Critical thinking◄—————— Academic writing  ☐

c. Critical thinking◄—————►Academic writing  ☐

**17. Which stage(s) does critical thinking affect in academic writing?**

a. Thinking stage  ☐

b. Research stage  ☐

c. Outlining stage  ☐

d. Drafting stage  ☐

e. Revising stage  ☐

f. Editing stage  ☐

**18. Do you think that critical thinking can eliminate the problems that EFL students face when writing their academic papers?**

Yes [ ]                                         No [ ]

➢ **If yes, how?**

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**We would appreciate any further suggestions or comments.**

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**Thank You**

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

MOHAMED KHIDER UNIVERSITY OF BISKRA

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

SECTION OF ENGLISH

**<u>Teachers' Questionnaire</u>**

Dear teachers,

   We are currently conducting a research about the importance of critical thinking in enhancing students' academic writing. This study aims to raise awareness about the importance of applying critical thinking skills in academic writing. We would be very grateful if you could answer this questionnaire which is designed for the accomplishment of a Master dissertation. All answers will be held in the strictest confidentiality. Thank you for the time you are taking to complete this questionnaire.

   Please, put a tick "√" in the appropriate box, give full answers whenever necessary and justify your answers whenever needed.

**<u>Section One:</u> Background Information**

**1. Would you please specify your educational qualification?**

a. Master ☐

b. Magister ☐

c. PHD ☐

**2. How many years have you been teaching English?**

………………………………………………………………..

**3. Have you taught Master One students before?**

**Yes** ☐                                           **No** ☐

    ➢ **If yes how do you perceive their level?**

    a. Good ☐

    b. Average ☐

    c. Weak ☐

**Section Two: Critical Thinking**

**4. In your opinion, what does the term critical thinking mean?**

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**5. Do you think that Master students are critical thinkers?**

Yes ☐                                       No ☐

    ➢ **If yes, how can you evaluate their critical thinking abilities:**

    a. Good ☐

    b. Average ☐

    c. Poor ☐

**6. Do you encourage your students to think critically?**

Yes ☐                                       No ☐

➢ **If yes, which activity (ies) do you think are better to improve students' critical thinking?**

a. Written assignments ☐

b. Classroom discussion ☐

c. Question / Answer interaction ☐

d. Reading texts ☐

Others………………………………………………………………………...……

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**7. In your opinion, encouraging students to think critically should be:**

a. Implicitly ☐

b. Explicitly ☐

c. Both of them ☐

➢ **Why?**..........................................................................................................

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**8. Teaching critical thinking skills in EFL classes is it:**

a. Very important ☐

b. Important ☐

c. Less important ☐

➢ **Justify please**……………………………………………………………...

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**<u>Section Three:</u> Academic Writing**

**9. Do you think that the time devoted to the course of academic writing is enough?**

Yes [ ]                                        No [ ]

> ➤ **Justify please**…………………………………………………………………………………...

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

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**10. How often do you ask your students to write academic papers?**

a. Always [ ]

b. Often [ ]

c. Sometimes [ ]

d. Rarely [ ]

e. Never [ ]

**11. Is there a relationship between academic writing and critical thinking?**

Yes [ ]                                        No [ ]

> ➤   **If yes, what kind of relation exists between them?**

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**12. Do you think that the students' academic writing could be ameliorated if they apply the critical thinking skills?**

Yes ☐                                   No ☐

> **If yes, how?** ……………………………………………………………………….
> …………………………………………………………………………………………...
> ……………………………………………………………………………………………
> ………………………………………………………………………………………..

**13. In which stage (s) in academic writing may students need effective critical thinking skills?**

a. Thinking stage       ☐

b. Research stage       ☐

c. Outlining stage       ☐

d. Drafting stage        ☐

e. Revising stage        ☐

f. Editing stage          ☐

g. All of them            ☐

**We would appreciate any further suggestions or comments concerning the topic or the questionnaire**

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**Thank you for your cooperation**

**الملخص**

تهدف الدراسة الحالية  إلى البحث في مدى أهمية التفكير النقدي في تطوير الكتابة الأكاديمية بالنسبة لطلبة اللغة الإنجليزية  في جامعة  محمد خيضر بسكرة  ، حيث أنه يتم تقييم أعمال الطلبة بناءا على قدرتهم معالجة و تحليل الأفكار بشكل فعال. لذالك فإن تطوير مهارات التفكير النقدي يعد من الأولويات و ذالك لتجاوز التحديات و النقائص التي تواجه طلبة الدراسات العليا. و لتحقيق الغرض الرئيسي لهذه الدراسة و المتمثل في تأكيد أهمية مهارات التفكير النقدي في تطوير الكتابة الأكاديمية فإن هذه الأخيرة تتكون من جزأين و هما الجزء النظري و الذي يسلط الضوء على كل من التفكير النقدي و أهم المهارات المتعلقة به و كذا الكتابة الأكاديمية، في حين أن الجزء الثاني خصص للجانب التطبيقي و المتمثل في الدراسة الميدانية، حيث تم استخدام استبيانين لكل من طلبة سنة أولى ماستر شعبة الإنجليزية وكذا الأساتذة. في الأخير فإن النتائج المتحصل عليها بعد تحليل البيانات قد بينت أن كلا من الأساتذة و الطلبة مدركون لمدى أهمية و فعالية التفكير النقدي في تحسين و تطوير الكتابة الأكاديمية، و من هنا يمكن القول أن نتائج هذه الدراسة كانت إيجابية.