Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra

Faculty of Letters and Languages

Department of Letters and Foreign Languages
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MASTER THESIS

Submitted and defended by:
AMANI BERDAI

Investigating Student's Difficulties in Writing Paragraphs

The Case of First Year Students of English at Biskra University

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Sciences of Language

Board of Examiners:

Dr. TURQUI BARKAT   (Examiner)   University of Biskra

Mrs. BENTAHAR LAMIA   (Supervisor)   University of Biskra

Dr. ZEGHDOUD MERIEM   (Chairperson)   University of Biskra

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Dedication

I am Amani Berdai,

I dedicate this work to my dearest and most precious thing in this life, my dear parents,

thanks to you I am in this place; may Allah heal them and preserves them to us.

To my brothers Mohamed and Bahaeddine;

I ask Allah to protect them and guide them in their lives

To my sisters Nadjah and Khadidja; I pray to Allah will make them successful in their

academic career

To the one whom I truly love, my husband

To my dear son or daughter;

I loved you without seeing you.

Thank you all

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would have not been completed without the help of Allah the Almighty.

My gratitude goes to my teacher and supervisor Lamia Bentahar, whom I felt comfortable with her in my work, and for being strong supporter from the beginning until the end. Thank you very much for all precious advices.

I extent my thanks go to the members of the of the board examiners Dr. BARKAT Turqui, Dr. ZEGDOUD Meriem, for accepting correcting and evaluating this work

Thanks to all teachers for their cooperation

Abstract

The majority of EFL learners are face a lot of difficulties when writing a paragraph, most of them trying to overcome these difficulties because it actually effects on their academic career. So, the goal of the present study is to know the most relevant difficulties that face first year university students to help them overcome Those writing problems by suggesting appropriate solutions, and in the same time help the teachers because they suffer more when they see these errors in their students' writing. To achieve the research's main aim, we followed the quantitative approach to gather and analyze data. Correspondingly, we use two data collection tools, a questionnaire for first year students of Mohamed Keider University of Biskra, and the second tool is also a questionnaire to teachers of Mohamed kheider Biskra. The results obtained from the teachers and students questionnaire reveals that many students suffer from writing difficulties because a lot of factors that are, mainly, the time devoted to the teaching of writing skill is not enough, and the lack of practicing writing outside classroom. At the end, some solutions were suggested from teachers and students help overcome those problems of writing.

List of Abbreviation

EFL : English Foreign Language

List of Charts

List of contents

General Introduction

1. Introduction and background

The writing skill is the most important for any learner or researcher, it plays an essential role in learning and communicating. As it is means of communication between the learner and his teacher, or in other word; when the student writes a paragraph, he presents his ideas and knowledge etc, the teacher can know and evaluate his level.

2. Statement of the problem

The ability to write an effective paragraph is critical for EFL learners at university in order to achieve success in their academic and future lives. Giving the importance of writing and the fact that it is so demanding and laborious, English Foreign Language learners find it so difficult to write without facing difficulties and committing errors.

3. Aim of the Study

- Help students to write an effective paragraph without errors
- Guide students as to how to help themselves avoid this mistakes and overcome writing difficulties to write better paragraph

4. Research Questions

- What are the major difficulties that face learners while writing a paragraph?
- Did these problems obstruct the study of the students?
- What are the main solutions that help learners overcome these writing difficulties?

5. Significance of the Study

This study will beneficial for both first year university teachers and their students. It is hoped that this study will sensitize both teachers and students about the most common difficulties in writing paragraph. It will also, in one hand, it will enable teachers find solutions to their student's difficulties while writing a paragraph, in the other hand, it will help the students themselves overcome these writing difficulties and their fears of making mistakes will vanish. This study also will assist first year university students to adopt advanced techniques for writing a paragraph.

6. Research Methodology

6.1. Population

This study is for first year student of Mohamad kheider University of Biskra. Additionally, the current study is about the writing difficulties that face first year university student while writing a paragraph. Therefore, this study deal with both teachers and students of first year university Mohamad kheider Biskra.

6.2. Participants (Sample)

6.2.1. Teacher's sample

Because our study is talk about writing difficulties that face first year university students while writing a paragraph, we chose fifteen (15) teacher from Mohamed Keider University to work with. We gave them a questionnaire to answer to gather data and see their thinking about the subject.

6.2.2. Student's sample

In this study we chose thirty (30) students from University of Mohamad kheider Biskra to deal with. We work with them and gave them a questionnaire to see how much they interesting with writing and to what extent they suffer from difficulties when writing a paragraph.

6.3. Approach and Method

In our study and due to its nature we use a quantitative research approach in order to analyze our data and find connection between our two variable students writing difficulties and teacher observations of students writing difficulties when writing a paragraph.

6.4. Data Gathering Tools

We used two data gathering tools in our study, Student's questionnaire and Teacher questionnaire.

6.4.1. Students' Questionnaire

We use questionnaire for students because it is more useful for them and helpful to write and think slowly, so it administered to first year Mohamed kheider University of Biskra to gather and see their ideas and point of view about the subject.

6.4.2. Teachers' Questionnaire

The questionnaire is also used with the teacher as a tool to gather data and information from the teachers, we attempt to know the teachers thinking about this topic and benefit from them to support our study with their ideas and views then we compare between the two answers, teachers and their students.

7. Possible limitations

We have found a lot of difficulties while carrying out my study; nevertheless, the following difficulty is the most important one that we covered it. In fact, didn't have enough time to deal with students written products and to analyze them since I didn't start early because of some personal circumstances.

8. Structure of the study

The current study is divided into two chapters; the first chapter is the theoretical chapter; it is divided into two sections. The first section is about the writing skill: its definition, purpose, process of writing, however the second section is deal with the writing difficulties, we highlighted the most common writing difficulties. The second chapter is the practical one, it is dealt with analysis of the results, also it studies and analyze the findings with two data collection tools, students' questionnaire and teachers' questionnaire.

Section I: The Writing skill

Introduction

Writing is regarded as one of the most significant activities for the development of human faculties and senses, especially in terms of the development of the mind and memory. One needs to be able to express oneself freely and in a way that others can understand him better in circumstances where words might not be possible. greater than that. Being able to express ourselves on paper and get things off our chest can be quite healthy. Additionally, writing should not be treated lightly because it is a reflection of who we are. In other words, it acts as the principal basis for assessing someone's intelligence and knowledge. Writing is also an essential form of communication in the classroom.

1.1. Definition of Writing

Writing is the process of turning ideas into written language, according to Tiwari (2005:120). In other words, writing is the process of putting thoughts into words. In composition, example (or exemplification) is a method of paragraph or essay development by which a writer clarifies, explains, or justifies a point through narrative or informative details.

In light of all what has been said, Byrne (1991) asserts that writing is the most difficult skill for learners to master. He separates the issues into three categories. The first is a psychological problem. The second problem is linguistic in nature. The third is cognitive problem.

In addition, Fischer said that "no definition of writing can cover all the writing systems that exist and have ever existed".

1.2.   The Purpose of Writing

According to the online website Kansas state Department of Education any writer should start by asking themselves, "Why am I writing?" What drives or goals do I have for my writing? In many writing settings, a person's immediate objective can be to complete the task or earn a decent grade. You'll write better and be able to communicate with an audience more effectively if you know why you're writing.

The reason or reasons for why a piece of writing was written are its purpose.

Knowing what format to use, how to organize and focus the writing, what kind of evidence to use, and whether to employ a formal or informal writing style are all made easier when writing with a purpose in mind.

There are *eight* important types which are:

  1.*To express*

  2. *To describe*

  3.*To entertain*

  4. *To inform*

  5. *To explain*

  6. *To persuade*

  7. *To solve problem*

  8. *To mediate*

It must be emphasized, nevertheless, that writers frequently combine objectives in a single piece of writing. Therefore, before attempting to convince readers to choose a particular course of action, we may start a business report by providing them with relevant economic information.

1.2.1. Express

Expressive writing is a way to share knowledge, ideas, and emotions on important and intimate subjects. According to some researchers (e.g. JW Pennebaker, 1993), this type of disclosure can have a variety of negative effects on one's physical and mental well-being.

1.2.2. Describe

According to Anne Lamott she suggests that you should pay attention to your surroundings and everyone in it, making notes of what you notice. According to her the author is "a person who is standing apart, like the cheese in", The farmer in the Dell, who was alone himself and decides to take a few notes, as described on page 97. It seems that some authors don't need to record their observations of the outside world. Her response to a writer friend's remark that a thought couldn't be meaningful if you can't remember it till you get home can be understood by those of us whose recollections weren't always so excellent.

1.2.3. Entertain

According to Rehbein T. Students fit their purpose for writing to their audience, and writing for entertainment is another typical aim. Writing for entertainment uses a topic, an event, or a story to entertain readers. Students can write to entertain in a variety of ways. Telling a narrative is the most typical method. The tradition of telling stories is as old as

the holiday visits with family and friends. Additionally, students can express themselves through short tales, poems, or comics.

1.2.4. Inform

According to Lauren Spencer from her book A step by step to guide to informative writing "with the type of informative writing, ideas are presented in a certain order so that the reader can follow the explanation easily"

1.2.5. Explain

According to William Zinsser explain is the root of term explanation. To explain, you might need to deconstruct a process into steps, contrast and classify things, define a difficult phrase, trace the sources and effects of a phenomenon, or outline a problem and suggest a solution.

1.2.6. Persuade

According to Matthew D Rocklage, Derek D Rucker, Loran F Nordgren psychology's basic subject of persuasion has long been the subject of research into influence the opinions of others. However, little is understood about how people's communications are affected by their desire to persuade others.

1.2.7. Solve Problem

According to University of Houston-Victoria, in a problem-solution paragraph, a problem (or problems) is identified along with potential solution.

1.2.8. Mediate

According to Xiao Lei 2008, this study, which contributes to the growing body of writing strategy research and sociocultural research on writing and second language acquisition (SLA), examines English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' use of writing strategies within the Activity Theory framework, in contrast to the traditional cognitive view of writing strategies. The study examines how these two learners strategically mediated their writing using data gathered from interviews, stimulated recollection, and process logs filled out by two proficient English majors at a Chinese institution.

1.3. Types of Writing

According to Danielle Perry as cited in January 27, 2020 your writing style will be determined by your readership and writing goal. The four primary categories of writing are expository, persuasive, narrative, and descriptive. It briefly discusses the distinguishing characteristics of these four writing styles. To learn more about utilizing these writing tenets.

Robin Jeffrey state types of writing as follow:

1.3.1. Persuasive

With this writing style, the author seeks to persuade the reader of the truth of a particular claim or argument. In addition to expressing the authors' ideas, persuasive writing offers arguments and proof to back up its assertions.

Examples include letters of reference, resumes, editorials, op-ed pieces, and argumentative essays for academic assignments.

1.3.2. Narrative

This writing style, which is frequently used in larger writing examples, aims to provide information within the framework of a narrative. The elements of a good story should be characters, conflicts, and surroundings.

Examples include historical reports, poetry, short stories, and novels.

1.3.3. Expository

This style of writing is employed to convey information with a larger audience and clarify an idea. Expository writing concentrates on the facts of a certain issue and gives evidence, data, or findings. Opinions are not to be expressed in this type.

Examples include instruction manuals, news pieces (not editorials or op-eds), how-to articles, and business, technical, or scientific writing.

1.3.4. Descriptive

In order to give the reader a distinct picture in their minds, this form of writing uses imagery. By engaging the senses, this technique encourages readers to feel a stronger connection to the content. To captivate the reader, descriptive writing uses literary devices like similes, metaphors, and allegory.

Examples include poetry, fictitious books and plays, autobiographies, and first-person recounts of events.

1.4. The Importance of Writing

According to Urbanova and Oakland, 2002 today's written languages serve significant social and educational purposes, and their standing enjoys a high level of social prestige

As Kelly Walsh says since 12 years ago writing is important because it is used extensively in higher education and in the workplace. If students don't know how to express themselves in writing, they won't be able to communicate well with professors, employers, peers, or just about anyone else.

Much of professional communication is done in writing: proposals, memos, reports, applications, preliminary interviews, e-mails, and more are part of the daily life of a college student or successful graduate. Even if students manage to learn the material in their college classes without knowing how to write well, they won't be able to express their knowledge to the people who are making the big decisions. Potential employers won't know whether or not head knowledge can be applied to everyday demands unless it's through a spoken interview. Even the majority of certifications and licensures require basic writing skills to obtain. The inability to write makes for a stillborn career.

1.5. What Makes a Paragraph Better?

According to Gina Hogan Cengage Learning, 2012 a successful paragraph should always have the following four components: unity, coherence, a topic sentence, and adequate development. A paragraph must be entirely focused on the topic, issue, or argument being explored in order for it to preserve its feeling of wholeness. Organization and structure of thoughts and ideas is essential for strong writing. Hogan approaches

writing as a building activity. Students learn the writing process and concise paragraph construction using clear, step by step building blocks. In keeping with the building theme, patterns of writing are broken into two units: formal or prescriptive paragraph structures and informal or loose paragraph structures.

1.6.   **Improving Writing**

According to Kellogg, advanced writing abilities play a key role in both scholastic success and subsequent professional success. On tests of their writing abilities, American students, however, rarely achieve high marks (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2002). The working memory demands of writing processes should be decreased in order to increase writing performance so that executive attention is free to coordinate interactions between them. Theoretically, this is possible through intentional practice, which teaches authors to acquire executive control through frequent writing chances and timely, pertinent feedback. In order to significantly enhance the amount of writing practice pupils receive, it may be possible to reduce the intense grading obligations imposed on instructors through the use of automated essay scoring software.

Conclusion

Since writing is the most important in all fields, this chapter have touched on defining what writing is, and identifying the purpose of it to make students well known about its important, in addition to the types of writing, and its process steps. The chapter explain the importance of writing and its benefits, as a lot of information about writing mentioned in this part to alert the student that writing Do not rely on practicing it at home only with the intention of developing it, but it must also be done in schools and with the help of teachers to be able to reach the desired goal.

Section II : The Writing Difficulties

Introduction

One of the most challenging aspects of learning English as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL) is writing.

Abu Rass (2015) indicated that "writing is a difficult skill for native and nonnative speakers alike because writers must balance multiple issues in their writing such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary and mechanics which means using the right punctuation, spelling and capitalization".

Nunan (2003) said that "writing is both a physical and mental act. At the most basic level, writing is the physical act of committing words or ideas to some medium. On the other hand, writing is the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be clear to a reader".

Writing in a second or additional language can be challenging because it is typically thought to require some proficiency in writing in the original language, according to Kereni (2004).

2.1. Types of Writing Difficulties

We can say that writing difficulties could be summarized into the following points:

2.1.1. Grammar

Grammar is described as "the internalized system that native speakers of a language share" by Hartwell (1985) (p. 111).

according to Harmer (2001), grammatical rules are not the decrees of instructors, editors, or other authorities but rather the laws that order language. It just outlines how

people speak and write, because once people start speaking, the rules alter and employ various writing styles.

2.1.2. Spelling

According to Rebecca Treiman, 2018 the ability to spell correctly is crucial for both writing and reading, but how spelling should be taught is up for debate. Even though youngsters pick up some spelling skills as they come across words while reading, this is typically insufficient to help them become proficient spellers. In order for kids to learn how the writing system works and not only memorize how words are spelt, systematic spelling training is necessary. Although teaching phonics is more effective than some other instructional strategies, it also paints a distorted and incomplete picture of English and several other writing systems. It is more efficient to study words and the patterns they adhere to. Teachers need additional opportunities to learn about writing systems and the evolution of spelling in order to effectively employ such strategies.

2.1.3. Punctuation

According to the eighth edition of the Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary, punctuation is the use of symbols to demarcate the beginning and end of sentences and phrases, such as the comma, period, and colon.

According to Halliday (1989), these activities can be broken down into three primary stages. The first stage entails drawing boundaries between different grammatical categories. The second task is status marking, which denotes the speech. The third identifies the sentence's relational units.

2.1.4. Vocabulary

Alpino Susanto, 2017 states that vocabulary acquisition is a crucial component of learning a foreign language. Whether in books or verbal dialogue, the definitions of new words are usually highlighted. The relevance of vocabulary to a language learner is acknowledged as being crucial to language training. The foundation of learning a new language is vocabulary. Few studies suggest that teaching vocabulary can be problematic since some teachers are unsure of the optimal teaching practices and occasionally have no idea how to begin putting an instructional emphasis on vocabulary learning (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008).

2.1.5. Handwriting

Harmer (2001) asserts that even though most communication today takes place via a computer keyboard, handwriting is still significant for personal correspondence, written assignments, and mostly for tests. Consequently, teachers must cope with the value of having good handwriting and encourage their students to do so through copying exercises because poor handwriting is distracting to readers and test graders.

According to Steve Graham students with learning disabilities frequently struggle with handwriting and spelling, which can impede other writing processes, limit the growth of writing, and label a child as a poor writer. He suggests that explicit and systematic training as well as incidental or natural learning approaches are needed to maximize the development of these two fundamental writing tools in order to reduce the detrimental effects of handwriting and spelling issues. A thorough discussion of the research on and

practice with these kids' handwriting and spelling is provided as the use of these methods with students with learning difficulties is looked at.

2.2.   Exploring the Relationship Between Writing and Student Motivation

Roger Burning and Christy Horn (08 Jun 2010) add that Writing is a very fluid process of problem solving that necessitates regular monitoring of task goals, according to two decades of   cognitive research. The intellectual and social benefits of becoming a skilled writer are enormous, but the lengthy and challenging nature of the process presents special motivational difficulties. Speech development can serve as a model for the growth of writing motivation, but writing need a unique focus on the variables that foster motivation. In order to develop motivation, four sets of conditions are suggested: fostering involvement through real writing activities, giving a supportive atmosphere for writing, and fostering pleasant emotional environments. In the majority of writing situations, it is believed that teachers' personal writing ideas are essential to creating these conditions. To comprehend the evolution of desire to write, systematic motivational research is required to supplement our understanding of the cognitive processes involved in writing.

Movement both emotional and cognitive defines motivation, and movement also defines the writing process that results (Nelson, 2007).

Graham, Harris, and Mason (2006) took motivation into account when developing writing abilities.

According to Akyol and Aktaş (2018), motivation was crucial in helping students increase their writing abilities. Hidi and Boscolo (2006) described the factors that affect

writing motivation as being willing, having enough information, writing about a straightforward subject, getting immediate feedback, and exerting constant effort.

According to Boscolo and Gelati (2007), students' willingness to write generally had a tendency to decrease and disappear, and the majority of writing studies were perceived by students as tedious monotonous, and exhausting. It indicates that writing motivation and writing ability are directly related.

According to Kurudayolu and Karada (2010) on the relationship between writing motivation and writing skills. They claimed that it was important to motivate pupils to develop writing as a fun hobby and a habit.

According to Bruning and Horn (2000), maintaining motivation was challenging. They also noted that motivation was crucial for the act of writing. These investigations demonstrated that writing motivation plays a significant part in the sustainability of the writing action.

Conclusion

This part talks about the difficulties of writing a paragraph for students and their impact, we mentioned the types of difficulties they face, in addition to the relationship between student motivation and writing. As writing is the most important step for the student and the most difficult, they must practice and cope with those problems.

Chapter two: Fieldwork

Introduction

The current study investigates the writing difficulties that face first year EFL university students when writing a paragraph. This chapter is the practical part based on the analysis of the data gathered from students and teachers to analyzing them using pie charts. Then a careful discussion of the results is provided based on those charts.

2.1. The Research Design

To respond to the research questions, we chose the descriptive design. We opted for the quantitative approach that corresponds to the nature of the topic.

2.1.1. Research Approach and Method

The investigation's major objective is to know the main difficulties of writing a paragraph and how to overcome them. Therefore, the current study used the quantitative approach to gather data relying on the questionnaire as the data gathering tool.

2.1.2. The Population and Sample

This study was conducted on first year EFL students at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. The reason for choosing this category of students is that they suffer from a lot of difficulties and obstacles in writing a good paragraph without mistakes at that time. It has become necessary to learn writing and to be helped to overcome those difficulties. First year students require more practice and assisted to make sure they develop their skills.

2.1.3.   Data Gathering Tools

To collect data, a questionnaire has been opted students and teachers, it was used to find out the most important difficulties that students face in writing a good paragraph and some solutions to help them. Thirty (30) students gave their personal answers and fifteen (15) teacher add more help by their answers.

2.2. Students Questionnaire

2.2.1.   Description of Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed for first year EFL students (linguistic science) at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. We choose 30 students from different classes to see their ideas and thinking about writing and precisely about the difficulties they face, we have highlighted some of the difficulties they face with the aim of knowing them, trying to find out solutions to students and verifying their perception.

The questionnaire was structured, we divided it into two sections, the first section was about The Writing Skill, and general information for students to know which category we are dealing with, and the second section is questions about The Writing Difficulties. We asked 14 questions some are open ended and other are closed, the closed ones were by choose the appropriate answers or tick yes/no. In addition, open ended questions were used to allow students express all what they have in their mind and explain their ideas.

Section one: The Writing Skill

The first section of the section of the questionnaire include nine (9) main questions about general information and writing in general. At first students were asked about their gender and their choice of English is it personal or imposed to know which category we deal with. Second, they were asked about their level in English. Then, we move to ask questions about writing in general, if written expression module is interesting to them and how is their level in writing a paragraph. Furthermore, we have asked them how many written expression sessions they study in week and if it is enough or not; also, we add some questions to know how many paragraphs the wrote and if they try to write at home. All these questions were asked to see whether they are interested to this issue and give it importance in their lives or no.

Section two: The Writing Difficulty

The second section contain five (5) important questions. First, participants were asked if they suffer from any difficulty in writing a paragraph, also what difficulties the face, after that we asked them on which step of writing process they have problems. Finally, the last question aimed to ask learners to propose and write some techniques and strategies to help themselves getting rid those problems while writing a paragraph.

2.2.2.   Administration of the Questionnaire

The finale version of the questionnaire was designed using google form; it was distributed to the students on May 22,2023, as they were present and available during the second semester at the university.

2.2.3.   Analysis of Student's Questionnaire

The questionnaire contained fourteen (14) questions, it relies to multiple choices, and yes or no ones, in addition to three (3) were asked in form of open ended question. After revalidating and piloting the questionnaire, it was distributed to the first year university students in classes. Thirty (30) students completed the questionnaire in the same day.
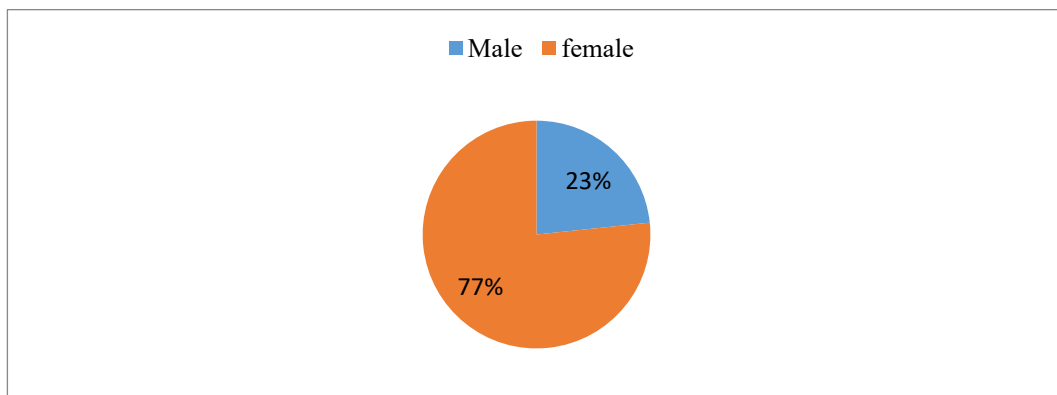
Section one: The Writing Skill

Question1. Gender

Chart 1.1: Student's Gender

Chart 1 shows that(77%) from the students are females. while(23%) male.

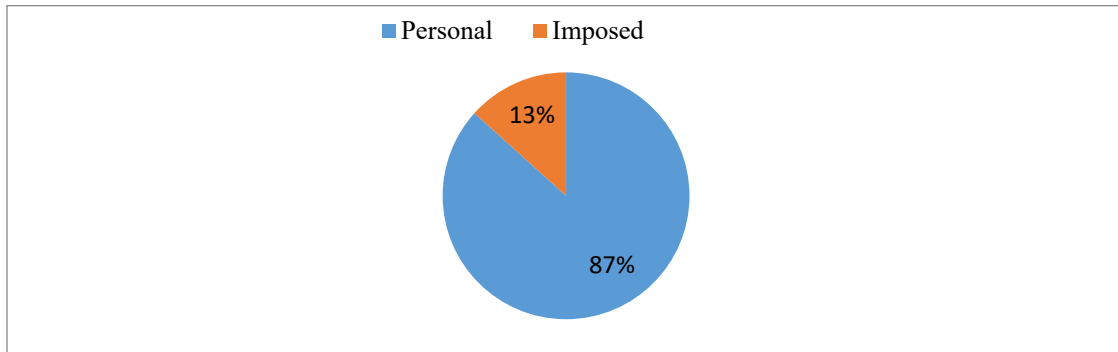**Question2. Choice of English**

Chart 1.2: The Choice of English

Chart 2 indicates that (87%)of the students chose English language with all their will, while (13%) of them were forced to choose it. Probably this will affect their motivation, and as a result poor writing

Question3. How is your level in English?

Chart 1.3: Student's level of English
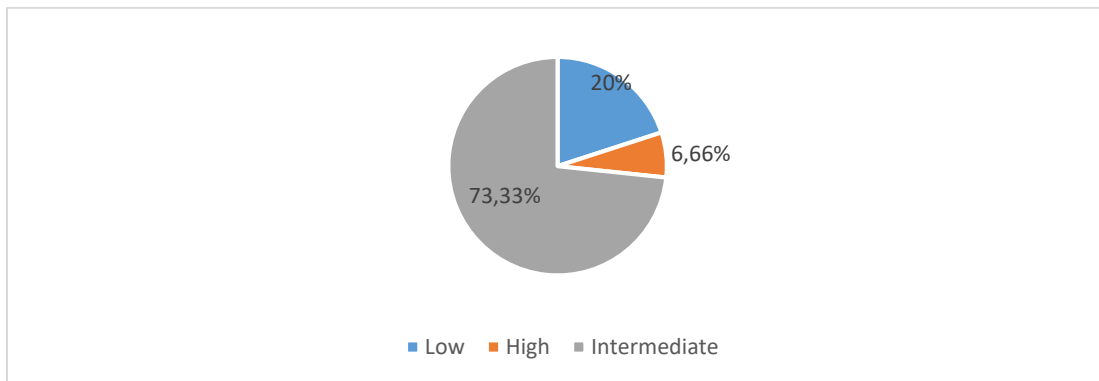
Chart 3 indicates that (6.66%) students has high level, and (73.33%) from them intermediate, while (20%) their level is low.

Question4. Is written expression module interesting to you?
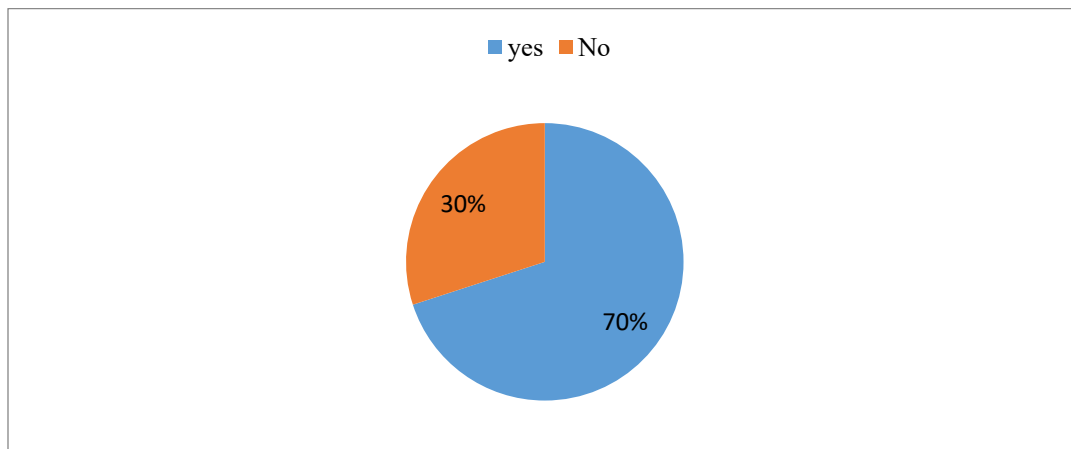

Chart 1.4: The importance of written expression module

Chart 4 show that (70%) students are interested in written expression module, and only (30%) from them are not interested at all.

Question5.How is your level in writing a paragraph?
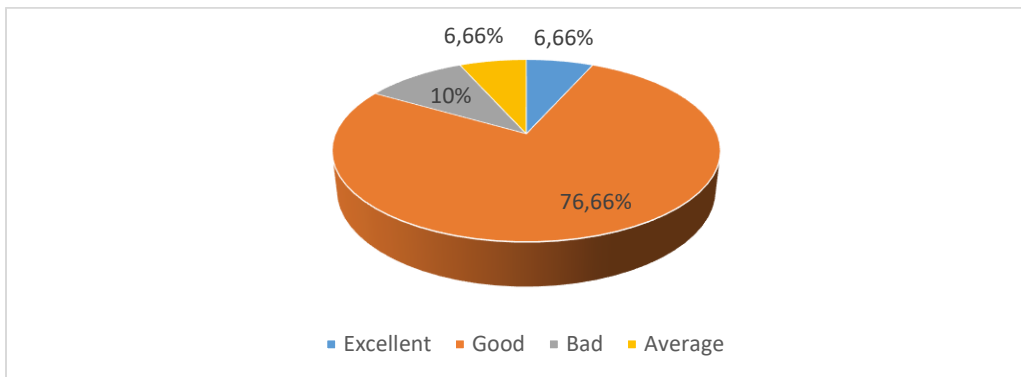
Chart 1.5: Student's level in writing paragraph

In chart 5, we see that (76.66) of the students have good level, while (10%) are bad, and (6.66%)excellent, also(6.66) from them have an average level. These results contradict what teachers proved. Teachers expressed that their students' level is average.

Question6. How many « Written expression » session you study in week?

 All students stated that they study two sessions per week.

Question 7. Do you think is enough to develop writing?
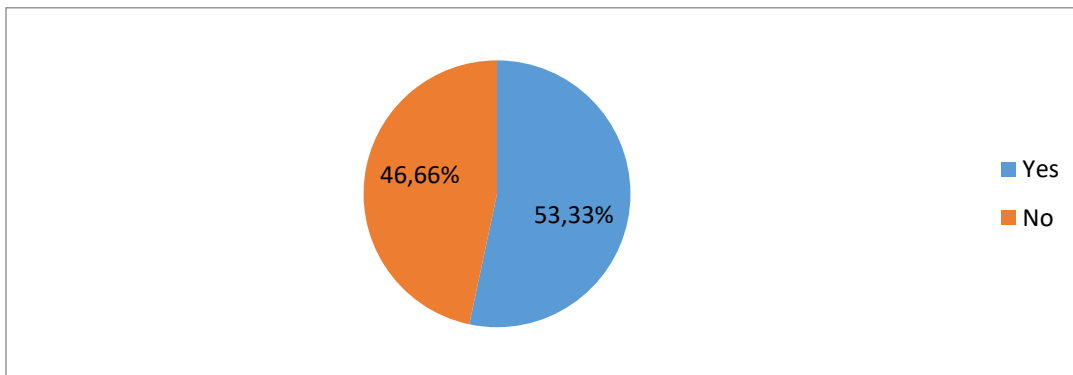
Chart 1.6 : The student's point of view about the number of written expression sessions

to develop writing

Chart 6 indicates that (53.33%) students see that 2 sessions per week are enough to develop writing, whereas (46.66%) say that it is not enough. The students' answers are predictable and this what teacher have also confirmed.

Question 8. How many paragraphs you have written so far?

In this question some students said that they wrote 3 paragraphs, one of them state that he/she write one paragraph every week, while other students wrote 10 paragraphs until now, whereas one of the students said "I don't remember", and a few of them state that they have written more than 30 paragraph so far

A lot of students said that they write just one paragraph, others (2); however, one of them said that she wrote (100) or (50) paragraph, and a male said" Not yet", in other hand there are learners whose wrote (9), in other hand (20), and a lot of them said (6) paragraphs.

Question 9. Do you try to write something at home to develop your writing skills?

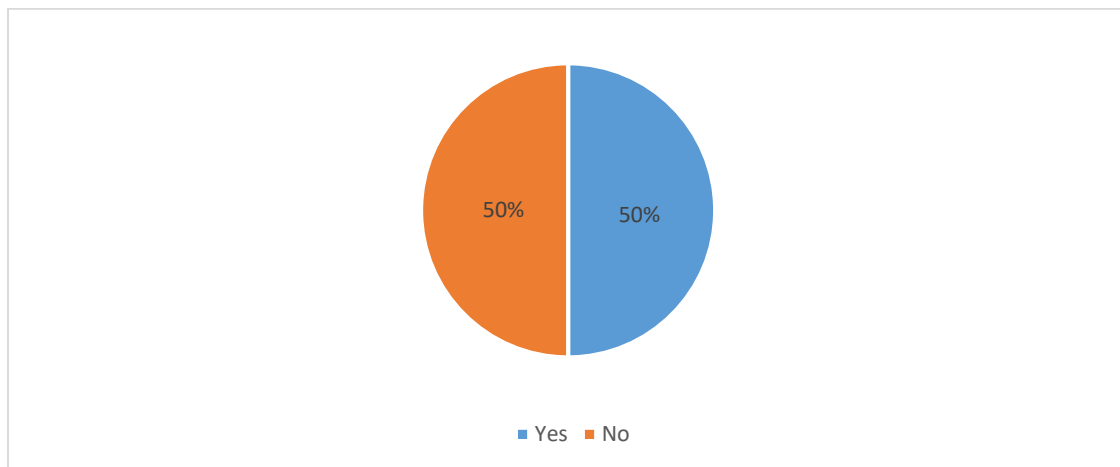**Chart 1.7**: The student's evaluation about developing their writing skill at home

Chart 7 show that (50%) students participate writing at home, and the same percentage (50%) for the students who do not write at home. i.e. They do no effort in develop their skills

The aim of this question was to know whether student do a personal effort to develop their writing skill outside class at home or not.

Section two: The writing difficulties

Question 10. Do you suffer from difficulties when writing a paragraph?
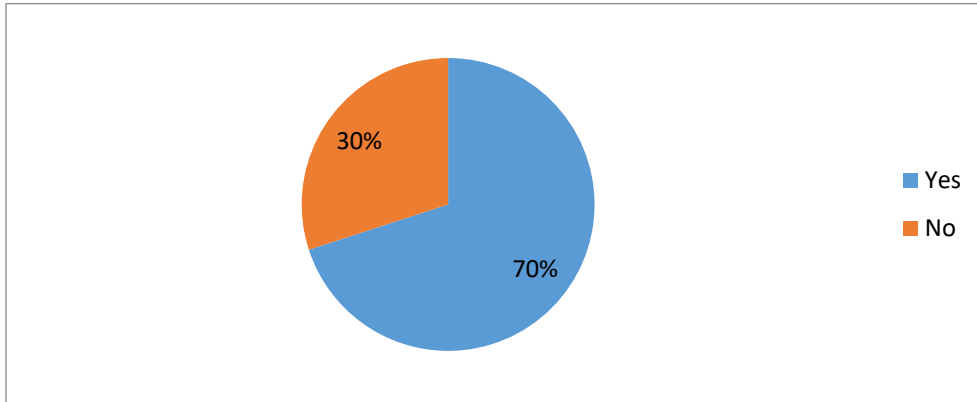
Chart 1.8: The students' perceptions about suffering from difficulties when writing a

paragraph

Chart 8 indicates that (70%) students suffer from difficulties while they writing a paragraph, whereas (30%) students doesn't have any problems. This finding is quite normal because the majority suffer from writing a paragraph, and they are writing in foreign language and because it is the writing skill, which so demanding and laborious when compared to other skills.

➢ Here we find a contradiction in the students' answers, as there are those who stated that they had no difficulties, but they chose some of difficulties that they faced when writing a paragraph in the question bellow.

Question 11. If yes, what difficulties do you face?
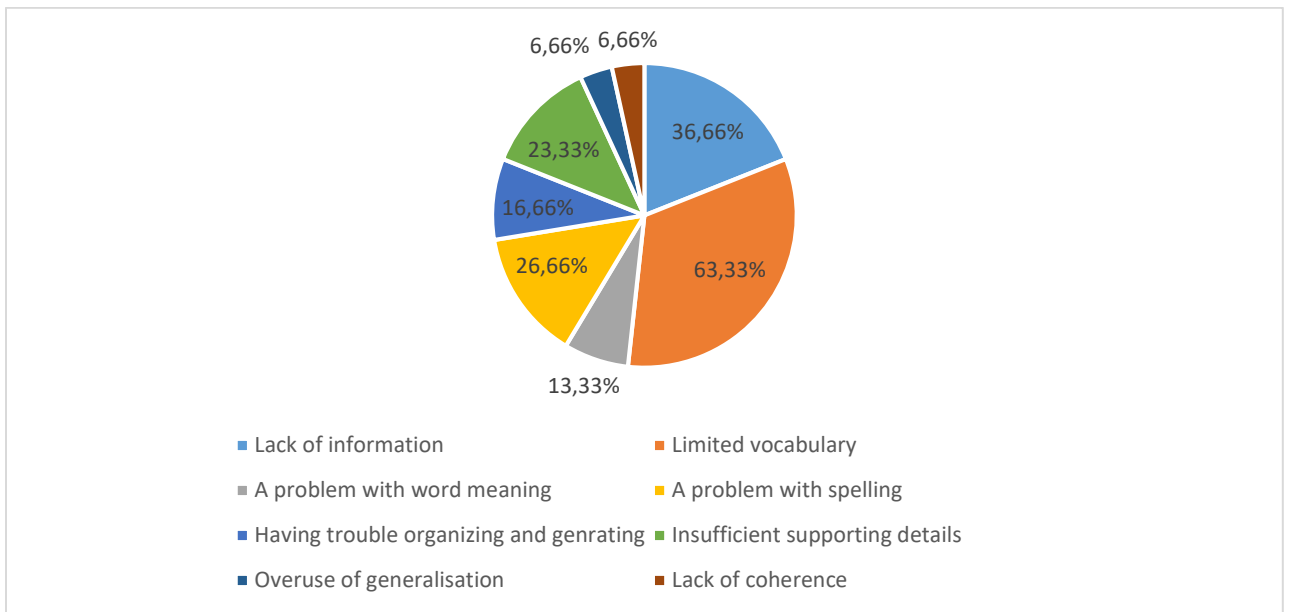
Chart 1.9: The difficulties that the students face when writing a paragraph

Chart 9 show that (36.66%) students face difficulty because of lack of information, and (63.33%) because of limited vocabulary, while (13.33%) have a problem with word meaning, also (26.66%) face a problem with spelling, and (16.66%) having trouble organizing and generating ideas, whereas (6.66%) have a difficulty with overuse of generalization, in addition that is the same percentage for lack of coherence. In addition to (23,33%) using insufficient supporting details.

❖ The following are other suggested:

- Grammar

- Punctuation

- Difficulty of how employ information

Question 12. On which step of writing process do you have difficulties?

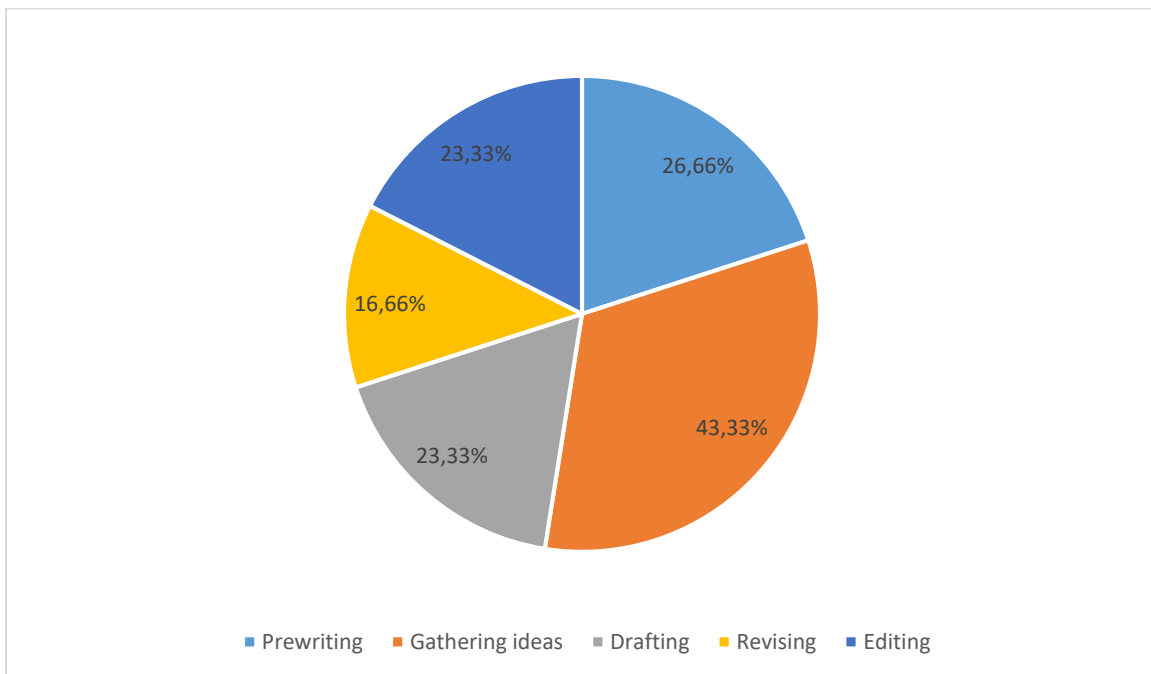**Chart 1.10 :** The difficulties that are faced by the students in the writing process

Chart 10 show that (26.66%) efl students have difficulties on prewriting, while(43.33%) on research step, and (23.33%) face problems in drafting, and only (16.66%) in revising step, whereas(23.33%) face difficulties in editing. As we noticed, the majority of students have problem with the stage of researching ideas.

Question13. In case you have problems with writing, what solution you make to overcome it?
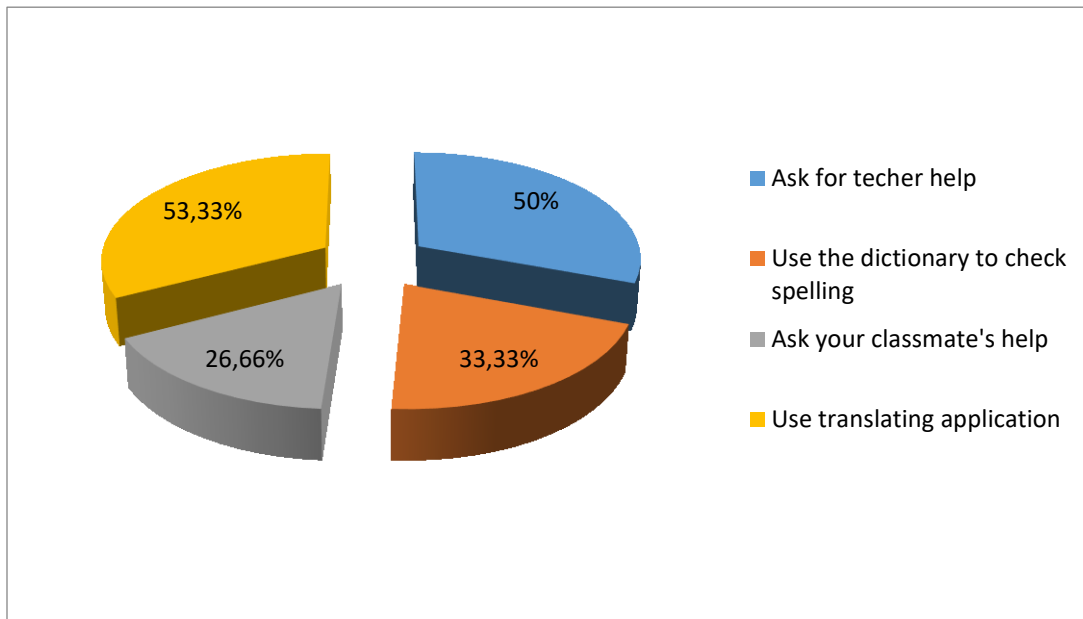
Chart 1.11: Students point of view about overcoming the writing problems

Chart 11 indicates that (50%) ask for teacher help, and (33.33%) from them use the dictionary to check spelling, while (26.66%) ask classmate's help, and (53.33%) students use translating application. So as it is display a large number of students rely on translation application to overcome their writing inability and not targrow this 50% result to teacher help

Question14. What strategies you suggest to help learners overcome their writing difficulties?

Among the answers, we mention the most important ones:

- Learn how do native speakers write their own essays, novels

- "Sorry, I' am not the ones who trained enough with writing paragraphs"

- "Using dictionary more than translating application, it will be more helpful"

- Watch some videos on YouTube about learning English

- Focus on the way of the paragraphs you read (spelling, punctuation, capitalization)

- Ask teacher help

- Follow the teacher and practice at home

- Use the application which named" Gramerly" is very useful and help you how to write

- "Revising your written expression lessons would be helpful

- "Try to write your daily routine to make yourself having enough information and skip the spelling mistakes or some difficulties, also try to write a paragraph about any topic you want"

- "Read a lot that will help you to get vocabulary and a good style"

2.3. Teacher's Questionnaire

2.3.1. Description of Teachers' Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was used with a set of eight (8) questions to find out the teachers' point of view about the difficulties of writing a paragraph and its impact on the students, while exploiting the knowledge, culture and ideas of the teachers in finding appropriate solutions to solve these problems and avoiding it in a number of ways that can help the students a lot.

2.3.2. Administration of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire targeted teachers who taught written expression. It was distributed to 15 teachers at Mohamed khider university Biskra on May 23,2023. The questionnaire was answered in the same day but some of them within hours due to their preoccupation with exam.

2.3.3. Analysis of the Questionnaire

After studying the questions well by the supervisor and correcting the mistakes, we concluded that some of the questions should be excluded because it's no practical, and other questions were added that cover the subject in all its aspects, also because of their suitability with the writing difficulties. The questionnaire was distributed to 15 teachers whom have experience in teaching written expression for many years, and this was enough to obtain sufficient, valuable information and ideas.

Question1. How many years have you been teaching writing to students at the university?
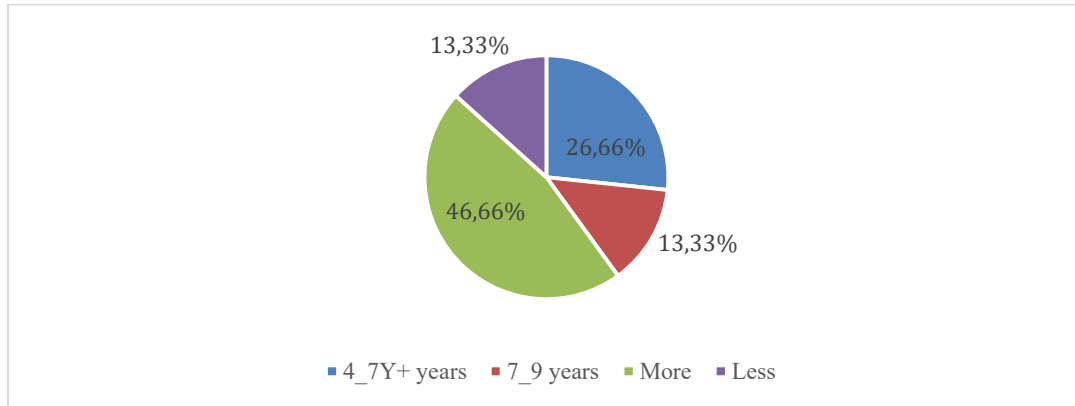
Chart 2.1: Years of teaching writing

Chart 1 show that (26,66%) teachers are teaching writing 4_7 years,(13,33%) from them teaching at university 7_9 years, and a lot of them more, while (13,33%) Less.

Question2. How is the level of your students in writing?
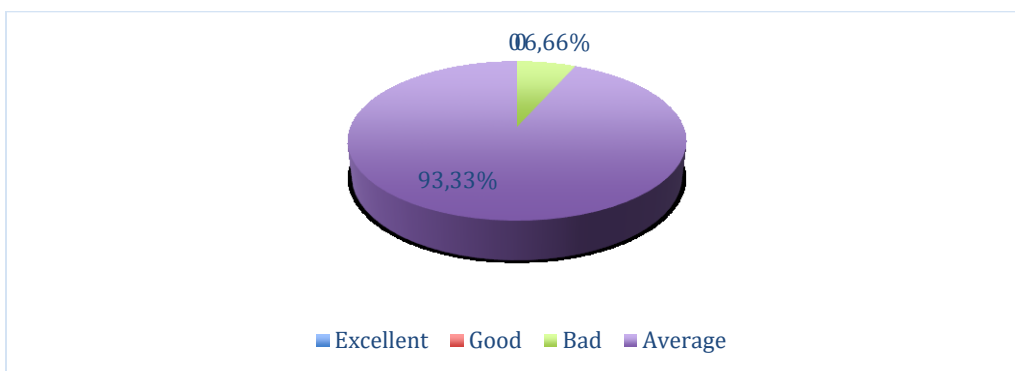
Chart 2.2: The level of the students

Chart 2 Indicates that there is no excellent student, and no one has a good level, while (6,66%) student their level is bad, and the big percentage (93,33%) is for the student whose had average level.

Question3. Is the devoted time to this module enough?

26,66%

73,33%

■ Yes ■ No
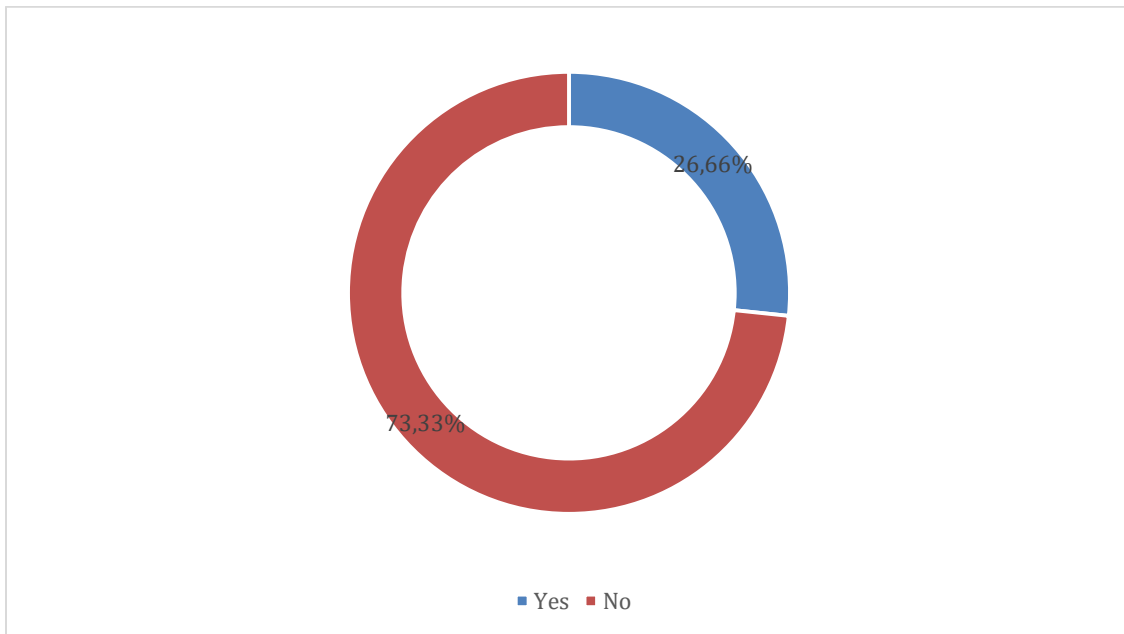
Chart 2.3: Time devoted

In chart 3 it clear that most of teachers (73,33%) agree that time devoted written expression module is no enough to overcome the difficulties of writing, whereas (26,66) said yes.

Question4. Which of the following is common mistake students make when writing a paragraph?
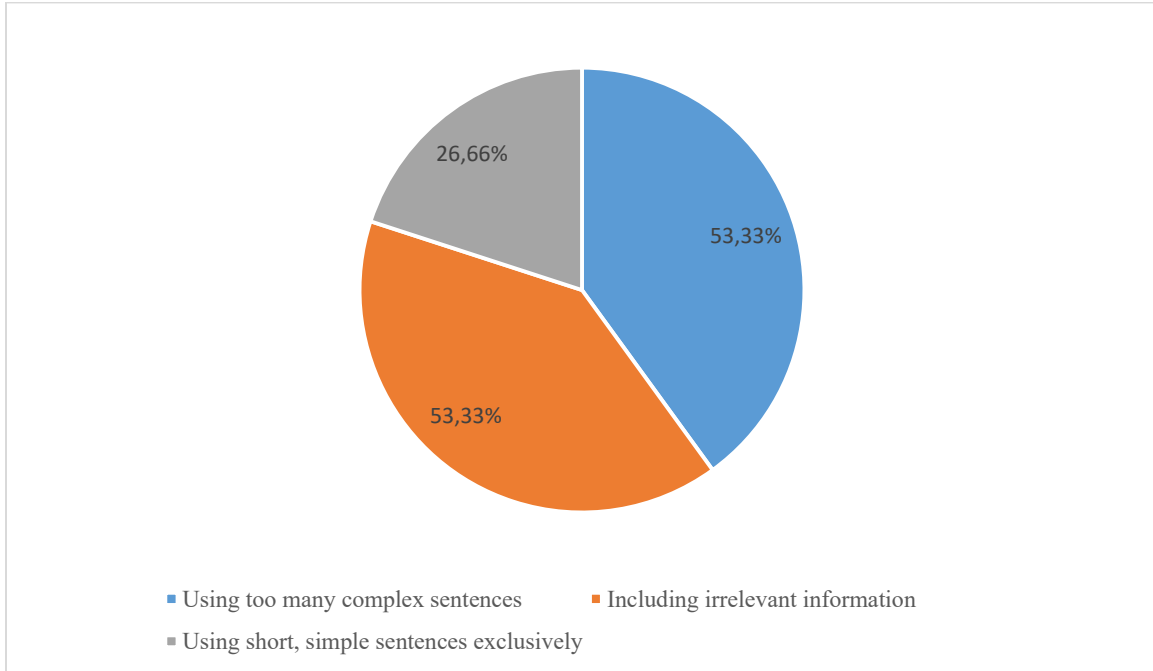
Chart 2.4: Students writing mistakes

Chart 4 indicates that (53,33%) students using too many complex sentences, and the same (53,33%) used to including irrelevant information, while (26,66%) students using short and simple sentences exclusively.

Question 5. Which of the following is a common difficulty students face when writing a paragraph?
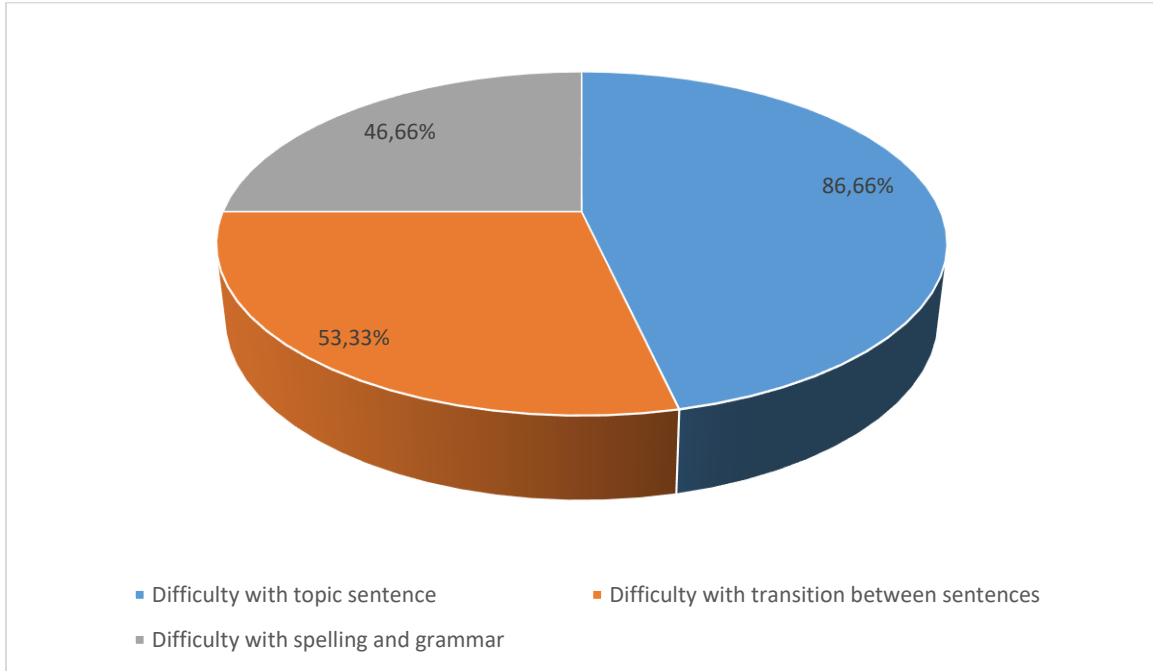
Chart 2.5: The common difficulty of writing a paragraph

Chart 5 show that topic sentence is the most difficult for the students while writing a paragraph which is estimated at (86,66%), however (53,33%) students have a difficulty with transition between sentences, and (46,66%) from them face difficulty with spelling and grammar.

Question6. **What are the main difficulty you observe your students face when writing a paragraph?**
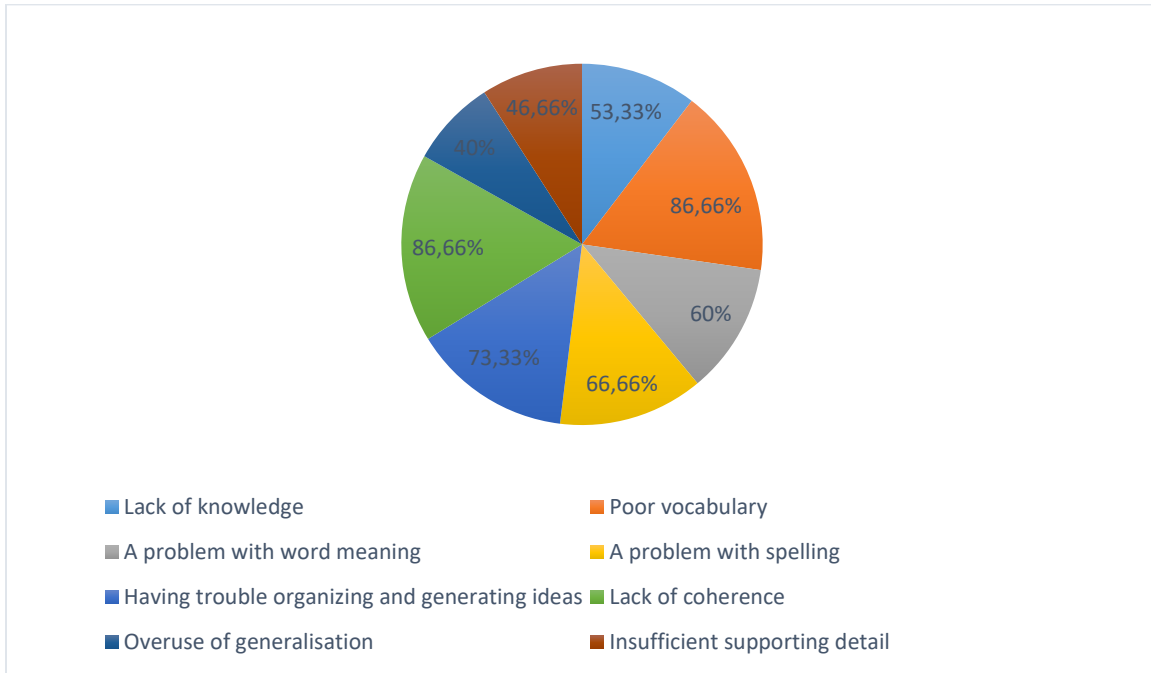
Chart 2.6: Difficulties students face while writing

➢ Chart 6 indicates that (53,33%) students suffer from lack of knowledge, while most of them (86,66%) have poor vocabulary, the same with lack of coherence, and (60%) face a problem with word meaning, also (66,66%) students have a problem with spelling, in addition (73,33%) having trouble organizing and generating ideas, the minority (40%) those students whose have difficulty of overuse of generalization, and (46,66%) write insufficient supporting details.

➢ The teachers added other difficulties they observe their students face while writing a paragraph:

- Using Arabic style

- Lack of self esteem

- Lack of practice and training in writing

- They have a crucial problem in style

- Problem in punctuation

- Problem of cohesion and coherence

- The interference of "L1" in their writing

Question7. Which of the following is an important step when writing a paragraph?
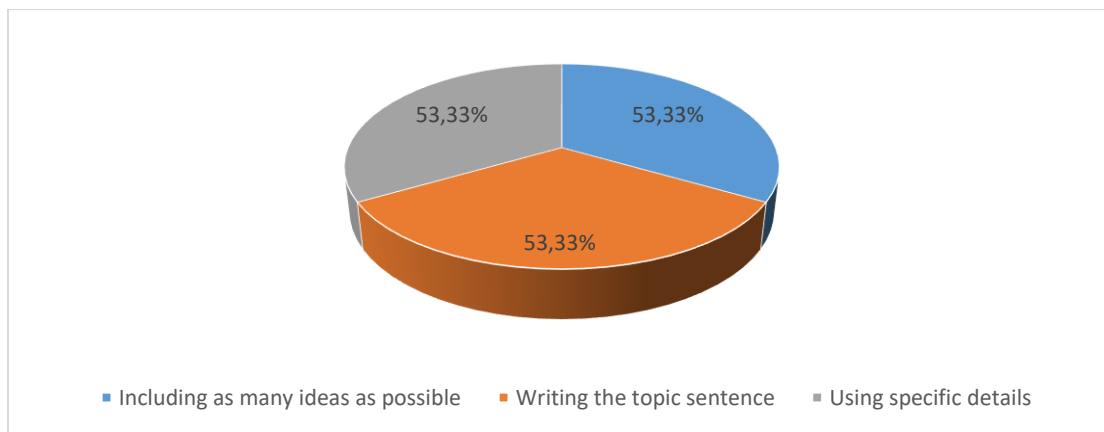
Chart 2.7: The important steps of writing paragraph

Chart 7 show that (53,33%) teachers state that including as many ideas as possible is the important step, and the same percentage for writing the topic sentences, also is the same (53,33%) for using specific details and examples.

Question8. What strategies or technics you propose to help students overcome writing difficulties?
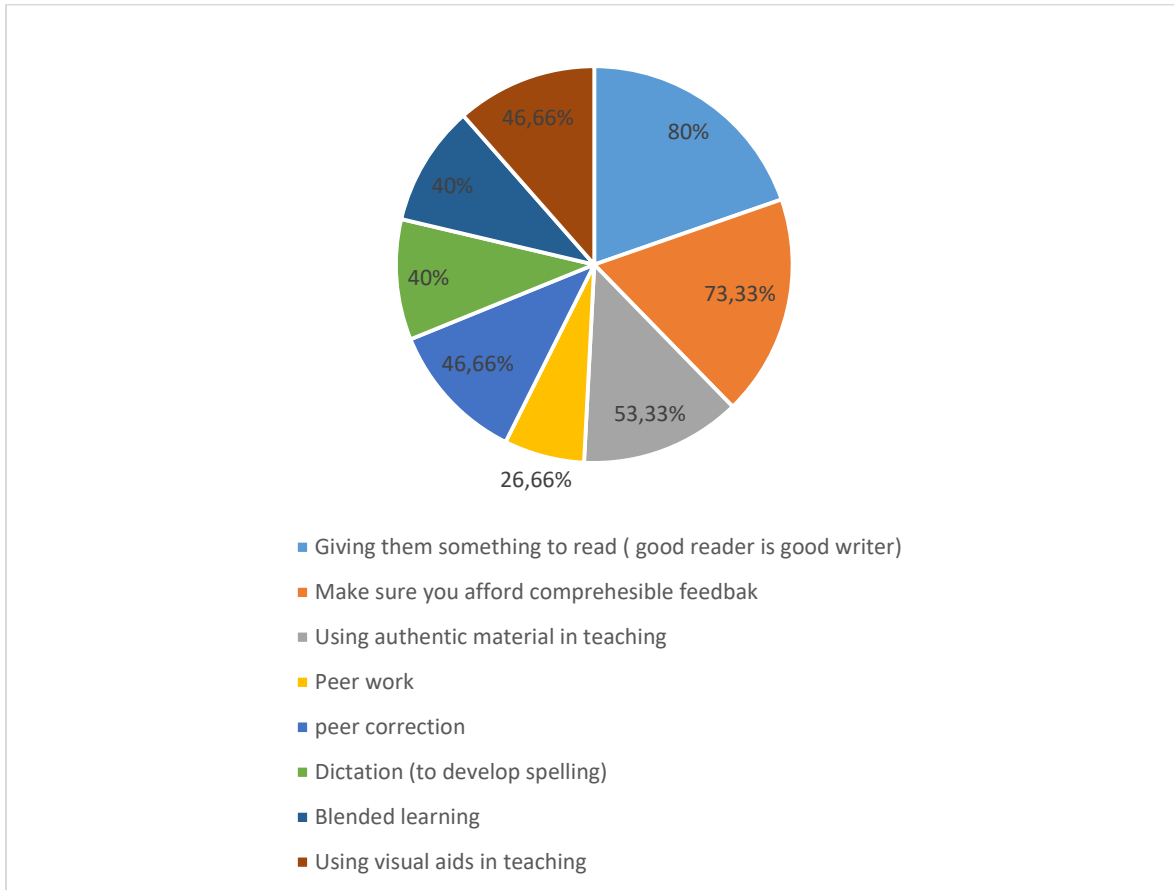
Chart 2.8: The strategies that overcome the writing difficulties

Chart 8 indicates that (80%) teachers agree that the best strategy is to give students something to read at home , and (73,33%) must make sure to afford comprehensible feedback, while (53,33%) see that using authentic material in teaching is the technic that help students to get rid difficulties , and just (26,66%) prefer peer work, however (46,66%) use pee correction, also (40%) from teachers agree that dictation is the best way to develop

spelling , and the same percentage about blended learning, in addition (46,66%) using visual aids in teaching to overcome writing difficulties.

2.4. Synthesis and Discussion of the findings

This part of the study gives the main findings of the students' questionnaire and the teachers questionnaire and hypotheses that stipulate the development of writing a paragraph and encourage students to practice it outside the school, taking care address these difficulties and get rid of them in many ways, this have been confirmed.

2.4.1. Students' Questionnaire

Since writing a paragraph is an essential part of the learning and studying, especially for first year university students, a lot of them expressed their interesting and admiration to the subject due to its importance. Every one gave his/her opinions and added their ideas and information to the topic that they think can help them overcome writing difficulties while writing a paragraph and develop their writing skills.

During the study, we found many students who suffer from these difficulties which consider a barrier to success. In other hand there are also a few who are not interested in writing, but these writing difficulties caused them many problems, as we notice through the previous results.

2.4.2. Teachers' Questionnaire

Through the questionnaire of the teachers, we saw that all the teachers state that there are a lot of problems facing their students while writing a paragraph, also the indicate that the time devoted is not sufficient to develop their writing style and teach them how to write a good paragraph according to the necessary conditions, in addition it is no enough at all to overcome these difficulties, they suggested a set of solutions to help their students

Conclusion

In the end, the main objective of this part is to study, observe and analyze the questionnaire of students and teachers. regarding the students, the questions were directed to first-year university students at the University of Mohamed Kheidar Biskra. The text of the questionnaire is to know the most important difficulties facing first-year university students while writing a paragraph, and to propose a number of solutions to address them. Whereas for the teachers' questionnaire, it explained the difficulties of writing a paragraph that face their students and what they are, taking into account the collection of solutions that the teachers saw as appropriate to get rid of these difficulties, or rather try to develop their writing.

General conclusion

The current study highlights a set of difficulties faced by first-year university students when writing a paragraph, and at the same time, which constitutes a little difficulty for teachers in teaching them and improving their writing.

This study contains two chapters; the first chapter is divided to two section. Section one is about The Writing Skill, we talked about writing in general then we move to specific details related to the topic of writing. In section two we attempted to highlight the common writing difficulties that face EFL learners.

The second chapter is field work, here we tried to analyze the collected data and discuss the results using the questionnaire tool for both teachers and students. Regarding students, we wanted to see and know what difficulties they face while writing a paragraph, and we know what solutions suit them according to their suggestions. As for teachers, the aim of the questionnaire was to know the most important writing difficulties that they encounter and face their students, which are repeated in each paragraph, and we also asked them for some solutions that suit them to solve these problems

From the findings we observed that most of students face a lot of difficulties and making errors in their writing, in addition they need to fix those problems as it must happen. All teachers state that their students suffer from writing difficulties and it make a big problem and obstruct them in teaching and developing their students' writing.

In short, this study states a set of difficulties that are repeated in the questionnaire of students and teachers.

Recommendations

Our study made everything obvious to us. First, students need to read more because the good reader is the good writer and practice at home to provide some new vocabulary and knowledge. Second, teachers should attempt to develop their students writing by helping them and dictate some paragraph before the session end, also they can give them something to write in the home or ask them to work in form of groups in order to benefit from each other's, and use the way of peer correction paragraph.

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Appendix Two

Teachers' Questionnaire

Prepared by the student: Amani berdai

This questionnaire aims to learn more about the difficulties that face first-year university EFL learners of Mohamed khider Biskra   while trying to write a paragraph. Hence , your collaboration will be of great help to manage this topic.

So please, you are required to answer the following questions.

Thank you so much.

1.How many years have you been teaching writing to students at the university?

   a.   4-7 years

   b.   7-9 years

   c.   More

   d.   Less

2. How is the level of your students in writing?

a.Excellent

b.Good

c.bad

d.average

3. Is the time devoted to this module enough?

Yes

No

4. Which of the following is a common mistake students make when writing a paragraph?

    a.   Using too many complex sentences

    b.   Including irrelevant information

    c.   Using short, simple sentences exclusively

5.Which of the following is NOT a common difficulty students face when writing a paragraph?

    a.   Difficulty with topic sentences

    b.   Difficulty with transitions between sentences

    c. Difficulty with spelling and grammar

6. What are the main difficulties you observe your students face while writing a paragraph?

•Lack of knowledge

•poor vocabulary.

• Aproblem with word meanings .

• A problem with spelling.

•Having trouble organizing and generating ideas

•Add others if there are

………………………..

7. Which of the following is an important step when writing a paragraph?

    a.   Including as many ideas as possible

    b. Writing the topic sentence

    c. Using specific details and examples

8. What strategies or techniques you propose to help students get rid of writing difficulties?

    a. Giving them something to read at home (good reader is good writer)

    b. Make sure you afford a comprehensive feedback.

    c. Using authentic material in teaching writing.

    d. Using group.

    e. Peer corrections.

    f. Dictation (to develop spelling)

    g. Blended learning

    h. Using visual aids in teaching

Appendices

Appendix one

Students' Questionnaire

Dear students, you are kindly requested to respond to this questionnaire which is about the difficulties you face while writing a paragraph.

Your collaboration will be of great help. Thanks in advance.

Questions

Section one: The writing skills

1.Gender

Male

Female

2.Choice of English

Personal

Imposed

3.How is your level in English

High

Intermediate

Low

Section two: The writing difficulties

4.Is written expression module interesting for you?

Yes

No

5.How is your level in writing a paragraph?

Excellent

Good

Bad

Overage

6.How many "Written expression" session you study in week?

…………….

7.Do you think is enough to develop you writing?

Yes

No

8.How many paragraphs you have written so far?

……………………….

9. Are you trying to write something at home to develop your writing skills ?

Yes

No

10.Do you suffer from any difficulties when writing a paragraph?

Yes

No

11. If yes what difficulties do you face?

•Lack of informations

•Limited vocabulary.

• Aproblem with word meanings.

• Problem with spelling.

•Having trouble organizing and generating ideas

•Insufficient supporting details

• overuse of generalisation

•Lack of coherence

 If there are others please mention them

………………………………………………………………

12.On which step of writing process do you have difficulty ?

•Prewriting

•Research

•Drafting

•Revising

•Editing

13. In case you have problems with writing, what solution you make to overcome it ?

    a. Ask for teachers help

    b. Use the dictionary to check spelling

    c. Ask your classmate's help

    d. Use translating applications

14. What strategies you suggest to help learners overcome their writing difficulties?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………….

الملخص

يعاني غالبية متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من الكثير من الصعوبات عند كتابة فقرة، يحاول معظمهم التغلب على هذه الصعوبات لأنها تؤثر في الواقع على حياتهم الأكاديمية. لذا فإن الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو معرفة أكثر الصعوبات ذات الصلة التي تواجه طلاب السنة الأولى بالجامعة لمساعدتهم على التغلب على مشاكل الكتابة تلك من خلال اقتراح الحلول المناسبة، وفي نفس الوقت مساعدة المعلمين لأنهم يعانون أكثر عندما يرون هذه الأخطاء في كتابات طلابهم. لتحقيق الهدف الرئيسي للبحث، اتبعنا النهج الكمي لجمع البيانات وتحليلها. في المقابل، نستخدم أداتين لجمع البيانات، استبيان لطلاب السنة الأولى من جامعة محمد خيضر بسكرة، والأداة الثانية هي أيضًا استبيان لمعلمي محمد خير بسكرة. وتكشف النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها من استبيان المعلمين والطلاب أن العديد من الطلاب يعانون من صعوبات في الكتابة بسبب الكثير من العوامل التي تتمثل أساسًا في عدم كفاية الوقت المخصص لتدريس مهارة الكتابة، وقلة ممارسة الكتابة خارج الفصل الدراسي. في النهاية، تم اقتراح بعض الحلول من المعلمين والطلاب للمساعدة في التغلب على مشاكل الكتابة هذه.