

*Students' Beliefs and Strategies about Writing Skills,
A Case Study of Second Year EFL License Students*

**تصورات واستراتيجيات الطلبة حول مهاراتهم الكتابية
دراسة حالة طلبة السنة الثانية ليسانس**

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الملخص:

تركز هذه الدراسة على التصورات والاستراتيجيات الخاصة بالمهارات الكتابية لدى طلبة السنة الثانية ليسانس المنتمين لقسم اللغة الإنجليزية جامعة البليدة 2 وتحقيقاً لذلك تم الاعتماد على اثنتين من أدوات البحث المتمثلتين في الاستبيان والمقابلة، وقد تم تحليل استجابات سبعين طالباً بالشكلين النوعي والكمي وذلك حتى يتسنى لنا تحديد تصوراتهم واستراتيجياتهم الخاصة بمهارات الكتابة لديهم. كشفت النتائج عن تصورات متنوعة بين الطلبة فيما يتعلق بمهاراتهم الكتابية والتي أثرت على استراتيجياتهم الكتابية إلى حد ما كما ويتوقع أن تقدم نتائج هذا البحث رؤية خاصة في هذا السياق وأن تفتح المجال لأبحاث أخرى وذلك من رؤى وزوايا مختلفة وكذا في بيئات متنوعة.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

مهارات الكتابة، تصورات، استراتيجيات، طلبة السنة الثانية، التعليم الجامعي.

Abstract:

This research explores the beliefs and strategies of Algerian students with regards to their writing skills. To achieve this, data were collected from learners at the Department of English, Blida2 university, using a mixed-method approach that involved both a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The responses of 70 second year participants were subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis to identify their beliefs and strategies related to their writing skills. The analysis involved statistical techniques for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. Findings revealed diverse beliefs among participants regarding writing, which, in turn, impacted their writing strategies to some extent. The findings gained from study are expected to provide insights into the issue and serve as a foundation for further studies under different conditions and in various settings.

Keywords:

Writing skills; beliefs; strategies; 2nd year EFL students; University education.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Progressive evolution within the vital realm of Foreign Language Learning has propelled significant improvements manifests through an altered focus, prioritizing the quality of learning and the developmental line of the learner and casting light on the importance of comprehending.

students' beliefs about writing in molding efficient language learning strategies. In investigating the field of foreign language learning, it appears that learners embrace different writing beliefs that affect their strategies in learning a language in general, and writing in particular (Wenden, 2001; Yang, 1999) . Learners often embrace beliefs about their writing abilities, the significance of writing skills, and the effect of writing on their overall academic achievement . Such beliefs , indicative of different levels of self-awareness seem to considerably impact the strategies they use in their writing attempts. Some of them may hold certain beliefs in the need of frequent practice, while others may prioritize the implementation of different strategies for efficient language learning. Understanding the impact of these beliefs on students' strategies is vital in spelling out how students tackle their writing tasks, connect with the writing process and work toward achieving writing proficiency (White, 1999; Horwitz, 1987) . It appears that some EFL learners perceive their writing skills unconventionally.

Some are fixed in their mindsets and believe that writing is an innate skill that one either can possess or not. Others hold the belief that through diligence and practice writing can be learned. It appears to be useful to understand how these students' different beliefs affect their writing to better understand the strategies they select to use. Because of scarcity of prior research on students' beliefs about their writing, the researcher decided to undertake this study. Locally, nearly no existing study that adequately investigates the beliefs of students in relation to EFL writing has been found within the Department of English at Blida2 University in Algeria. Consequently, it becomes crucial to recognize and understand the beliefs of second-year license students as they engage in writing and casting light on the effect of held beliefs on strategies they use to meet the anticipated standards of academic writing performance. To achieve these objectives ,this study seeks to identify what beliefs do second year license students hold about writing? And how these beliefs impact their writing strategies. To answer these research questions, the researcher opted for a case study in which a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were used as the main research instruments to gather data from the participants.

2.Review of Related Literature

2.1-Writing

For many years , writing has played a pivotal role in both first-and-second language education; however , attention on L2 writing has been pretty recent. At present, there is a move in noticing writing not just as a separate skill but as intersecting with the process of learning itself. Writing sustains significance, as it permits learners to articulate themselves through written language and plays an important role in learning, cognition, and solving problems. Therefore, it is vital to scrutinize writing as a language skill that handles the purpose of communication and, in particular, smooths critical thinking rather than merely yields written content.

To be proficient in a language, one has to master its receptive and productive skills : listening, speaking, reading, and writing . According to the definition offered by The Online Encyclopedia of Writing Systems and Languages, writing is a tool of either visual or tactical communication . Writing encompasses not only the graphic representation of spoken words, whether on paper or an electronic device, but also the communication and organization of ideas that match with the rules of a specific language. According to (Hedge,1988,p.89) an important feature of writing is the skill of crafting, which she describes as "the way by which a writer integrates all the parts of the text, generating ideas through sentences and paragraphs within a unified framework." Likewise, writing is a technique of communicating ideas or feelings through the written vehicle (Harmer, 2004). The central principle is that it necessitates a knowledge about language, a knowledge about the milieu in which writing happens, and especially the purpose and proficiency in language usage.(Badger and White, 2000,pp.157-158). More studies have demonstrated that writing is the product of various cognitive processes linked with a thinking process (Sinclair, 2010). Sinclair asserts that writing is closely related to cognitive processes, declaring that the act of writing involves many cognitive tasks the field of research on language learning strategies, which acquired notice mainly due to the remarkable contributions of Rubin (1975).

The field of language learning strategies research came to light from the notable work of Rubin (1975),and Naiman et al (1996), and reaped agreement from a number of scholars (Chamot &Harris , 2019 ;Oxford (1990). However, this discipline has come under scrutiny in terms of both theoretical and practical issues. The theoretical grounding has been subject to controversy, and an accurate definition of language learning strategy has not been fixed . According to Oxford ,1990,p.8) learning strategies are “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective , and more transferable to

new situations”. She added that are “specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students (frequently deliberately) employ to promote their involvement in polishing their L2 skills. Owing to these strategies , the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language can be smoothed . It can be deduced that a strategy is a vehicle that helps, facilitates , and directs the process of learning in general and writing in particular. Through the use of effective strategies, students optimize their drive to push themselves forward throughout the steps of language learning and use, including the process of improving writing abilities. The term also relates to beliefs about writing, where personal beliefs about the writing process affect the strategies used by the individuals who navigate it and the quality of what they write.

2.2 Beliefs

The connection between students' beliefs and their writing has received limited attention. However, overall beliefs regarding writing significantly affect academic success, either by bolstering or impeding it. A belief is a conviction that something exists or is true.

Defining beliefs is at best a game of player’s choice. They travel in disguise and often under alias—attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principles, perspectives, repertoires of understanding, and social strategy, to name but a few that can be found in the literature. (Pajares ,1992, p.309)

Pajares views beliefs as an umbrella concept involving perceptions, attitudes, values, and more, accentuating their obscurity and impact on educational outcomes. Pajares' article is considered one of the most inclusive models of beliefs, propounding visions into their nature, their acquaintances with a comprehensive system of beliefs within an individual, and their conditions. Beliefs about writing reside in opinions about what good writing is and the practices of skilled writers. Some scholars(Baaijen et al,and de Glopper 2014) assert that students’ beliefs about writing interact with their comprehension of the writing process and reflect on the effect of how well they write.There are two reasons behind considering this issue.

The change from an interest on products to a focus on processes in the field of writing studies since the 1960s underscores the significance of analyzing learners' assumptions, experiences, and beliefs about writing in order to comprehend their improvement of writing skills. In addition, being aware of the social and cultural aspects of

writing signifies that learners are influenced by the social and cultural surroundings that mold their learning and writing approaches, laying a siege to their formation.

Students' beliefs about their writing abilities influence their strategies. Those who hold positive beliefs about their writing skills are more inclined to utilize effective writing strategies such as planning, rewriting, and editing. They perceive themselves to be capable and skilled, They perceive themselves to be capable and skilled, enabling them to engage in more sophisticated writing processes. Conversely, students with negative beliefs about their writing tend to shy away from employing advanced strategies, believing that they lack necessary skills. Consequently, they may resort to simpler and less effective strategies, such as copying from sources or avoiding writing tasks. This phenomenon is supported by research conducted by Graham and Harris (2000), who reveal that students who perceive themselves as proficient writers demonstrate a propensity for planning, rewriting, and editing than those who viewed themselves as poor writers. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the flipped side of a coin. Javadi et al. (2012) stated that students with low writing beliefs use fewer in-depth writing strategies and more surface-level ones, such as copying or paraphrasing from sources.

Thus, it is pertinent that instructors help their students develop beliefs about their writing abilities by supplying them with the tools and resources that they need to use more productive writing strategies.

Furthermore, understanding students' beliefs may help in identifying the degree to which this component affects their use of writing strategies.

3. Methodology

Considering the nature of the variables being investigated, this study is descriptive and adheres to a mixed-method research design, as its primary objective is to describe and delve into students' beliefs and strategies regarding their writing skills. In order to conduct this study, the researcher selected a case study by choosing participants among second-year students at the Department of English Blida2 University during the academic year 2022-23; more precisely, just after the first semester's exams. The researcher attempted to explore learners' beliefs about EFL writing skills and cast light on the impact of these beliefs on their writing strategy. Prior to administration of the research tools, a consent form was sent via email to the participants, inviting them to participate in the study. The form informed them about the research objectives and set up agreements on the requirements of participation. The investigative stage included a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to answer the research questions that necessitated the involvement of 70 second-year students. The second-year level was selected because they present a midway level

between first-year students who have newly acclimated to the university setting and third-year students planning for graduation. The sample appears to be moderately seasoned and reflective of his writing ability. Developed by White and Bruning in 2005, the Writing Beliefs Inventory Questionnaire is a key tool for collecting the data required to address the study's research questions. The questionnaire consisted of six sections. The first section, entitled background information, sought to gain insights into the profile of the participants under study. The second section was related to writing in relation to students' academic needs.

The third section provided an account of students' beliefs about the nature and importance of writing; the fourth section was related to students' beliefs about the focus of writing ,and the last section addressed students' beliefs about writing strategies. Responses to the questionnaire scales ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree, assuring the five response options. The questions were of different types: open-ended, close-ended, multiple- choice, and combined with some necessary justifications (See Appendix A). The informants' answers were collected, tallied to identify the frequency of each response, and converted into percentages. To gain a more in-depth understanding of students' beliefs and strategies, and precisely to answer the second research question : How Do students' beliefs impact their writing strategies? A semi-structured interview was conducted as the second instrument with (10) informants. Each interview lasted approximately 25–30 minutes, depending on the informants' interactive engagement. Five questions framed the interview, where each interviewee was asked about his/her level of writing strategy awareness, the factors that impacted their use of writing strategies, the potential influence of their beliefs on their use of writing strategies, the specific strategies they used, and the motives behind using them. (See Appendix B). The researcher recorded and transcribed the interviews with the students. Codes were used to maintain the participants' confidentiality (ST=student).

Initially, the researcher engaged in a thorough examination of the interviews by reading them line by line many times to extract "memos" and margin notes, as sketched by Creswell (2013).

These notes likely included the initial thoughts, reflections, and ideas that emerged from the data. The data were categorized based on the interview questions (see Appendix B). The researcher undertook a within-case study that consisted of an in-depth exploration of each student's account and identification of the link between the concepts and themes.

4. Results and Discussion:

4.1- Results

Table 1 provides a general background of the target participants, revealing their gender, age and period of studying English language . Out of the total number of them engaged in this study , there are a total of 78.57 % female participants and 21.43 % male participants. It is important to point out that there is a greater representation of females in the study of foreign languages, especially English, according to this dissemination.

Table N° 1: Participants’ profiles
Source: Done by the researcher

Participants’ Number	Age group	Gender /Percentage	Period of studying English
70	18- 25	15 Males: 21,43% 55 Females: 78,57 %	7-9 Years

The second section’s questions targeted participants’ beliefs about the importance of EFL writing skills.

They displayed a positive belief on the two items (items1 and 2), however ; their beliefs about taking up writing as a difficult skilled labor remained negative. Precisely, 78,57% believed that writing was very important while 21,43% viewed it as important. Upon further questioning, 40 % of the respondents indicated that they believed writing to be a necessity for their future careers prospects . Additionally, 34,29 % of the informants believed that it would serve their academic writing pursuits , and 25,71% viewed writing as a necessity for their academic achievement . In particular, 45.71 % emphasized the importance of good ideas. Among the respondents, 27.14% stressed the importance of correct grammar.In addition, 18.57% of the students identified precise vocabulary as a key. Conversely, a smaller proportion 8.57 % emphasized the importance of correct spelling.

The responses to the question "Are you satisfied with your level of writing?" revealed different beliefs among the students. Among the informants , 37.14% were very satisfied with their writing skills . Closely behind, 34.29% voiced satisfaction with their writing level. On the other hand, 28.57% clearly stated that they were not satisfied with their writing proficiency. These percentages highlight the varied range of the participants’ beliefs towards their writing quality

Table 2 provides the answers of the participants to the third part's questions about their beliefs about English writing and its challenges in relation to other language skills.

Table N°2: participants' beliefs about the nature and importance of writing
Source: Done by the researcher

No.	Statement	SDA	DIA	UD	A	SA
1	I believe that writing in English is a time-consuming	28,57%	27,14%	8,57%	18,57%	17.14%
2	I believe that Writing is crucial and must be given same weight in the acquisition of English as other skills	7.14%	12.86%	11,43%	47,14%	21,43%
3	I believe that writing is more challenging than other skills of language learning.	4,29%	12,86%	25,71%	42,86%	14,29%

The ratings range from 1 to 5, with 1 suggesting "Strongly disagree" and 5 signifying "Strongly agree." With respect to the first statement, 28.57% of participants strongly disagreed with the belief that writing in English requires an important amount of time. In addition, 17.14% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement, while 27.14% disagreed. Regarding the second statement, 21.43% of the informants strongly agreed, whereas 7.14% strongly disagreed with the belief that writing is a vital skill that needs to be more considered than other skills.

Concerning the third item, 42.86% of participants agreed, but 4.29% strongly disagreed that writing was more difficult than other language skills. 42,86% strongly agreed that writing skills were a burden. The percentages indicated discrepancies between the informants' beliefs regarding the level of difficulty and the importance of writing in English when compared with other language skills.

The fourth part sought to identify the language aspects that students believed to point out while writing.

Table 3 : Participants' beliefs about the focus on writing skill**The source: Done by the researcher**

N o	Statement	SDA	DA	UD	SA	A
4	I believe that students should not worry about spelling or grammar until they are satisfied they have covered all of their important themes in writing.	34,29%	18,57%	0%	25,71%	21.43%
5	I believe that to be a skilled writer, students need understanding common writing forms like descriptive, opinion, compare and contrast essays	15,56%	12.69	0%	30,78%	10.97%
6	I believe that Grammar is vital, but it isn't as crucial as the writer's purpose.	8.57%	22.86%	0%	40.00%	28.57%
7	I believe that grammar and mechanics (spelling and punctuation) are the most important aspects of successful writing.	8.57%	22.86%	2.86 %	37.14%	28.57%
8	I believe that Students should proofread their work for both content and mechanical issues throughout revision.	7.14%	4,29	4,29	47,14	37,14

The guidelines were set by combining traditional (product approach) and current approaches about writing (process approach). Therefore, participants who followed the contemporary method, which promotes the content of their work, were defined as being of a positive mindset. Conversely, participants who adopted the traditional approach, that addresses mechanics and grammar, were identified as those with a negative belief about writing. Responding to this question about the components of good writing, students came up with diverse perspectives and regarding the first item ,beliefs were split on whether students should prioritize spelling and grammar over covering important content in writing. 18.57% of the respondents, conveyed disagreement with the belief that students should defer interest for spelling and grammar until they had completely covered their important themes in writing On the other hand, a portion representing 34.29% of the participants strongly disagreed with this perspective, accentuating the prioritization of spelling and grammar over thematic coverage.

Conversely, 25.71% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, promoting a focus on the improvement of important themes in students' writing before addressing concerns about spelling and grammar

As a final point, 21.43% of the communicated agreement with the belief, advocated that as thematic coverage should be prioritized, concerns to spelling and grammar persisted significant but can be referred to after thematic considerations.

The following part of analysis demarcates the beliefs held by learners about the strategies they used in their writing process as displayed in figure 1:

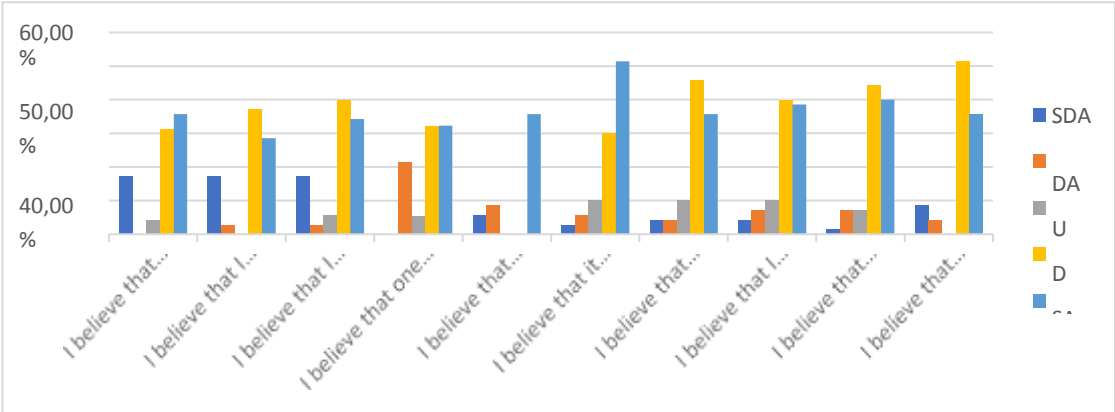


Figure N° 1 : The impact of participants' beliefs on their writing strategies

The source: Done by the researcher

Each statement in this section was communicated in affirmative terms. Based on the findings presented in figure 1, an average agreement level of 82.88% (covering agreement and strong agreement) was calculated. This implied that participants displayed a positive belief vis-à-vis the strategies needed for effective writing. This result could be further illuminated by noticing that a majority of participants were aware of some strategies that can enhance their writing. These respondents indicated that strategies such as planning, organizing, referencing auxiliary materials and collaborative work generated beneficial outcomes for honing their writing skills. In what follows, the analysis of this general observation :

As depicted in Figure 1, the percentage of students (82.88% - 40.43% agreed and 42.5 % strongly agreed) admitted that efficient writing requires knowledge and information connected to the topic. Likewise, a majority of respondents (28,57agreed and 37,14strongly agreed) agreed that using their background knowledge enhanced their writing process.

These findings indicated that participants recognized the role of prior knowledge in successful writing.

In light of these opinions, it was possible to extrapolate that students unveiled positive beliefs about the memory writing strategy, which stresses the connection of pre-existing knowledge with the new one to facilitate the writing process. Similarly, the majority of students had favorable beliefs about many aspects of the writing process. In particular, evidence demonstrated the following:

- Information organization received approval from 74,29 % of the respondents (40,% strongly agreed and 34,29agreed)
- Making an outline was approved by 64.62% of the participants (32,31,% strongly agreed and 32,31 % agreed)
- Setting goals were agreed upon by 81,52% of the respondents (45,71% strongly agreed and 35,71% agreed)
- Utilizing different strategies to nurture ideas was favored by 81,43 % of the students (30% strongly agree and 51,43% agree).

These results provide beliefs that learners held about aspects of the process approach to writing. This revealed that these students perceived the value of investing a suitable amount of time in the planning stage of writing when they generated an outline for their piece of writing. Furthermore, these data brought to light that students seemed to be somehow aware of metacognitive and cognitive writing strategies and stressed the importance of planning, organizing, and accessing a variety of resources to polish their writing skills.

The majority of the learners questioned professed positive beliefs about the usefulness of collaborative writing. A majority (81.52% –45,71% strongly agreed and 35,71% agreed) indicated that connecting with peers and instructors to build writing abilities was in itself a helpful technique for boosting their writing skills. In addition, the majority of students (82.4%–38,57% agreed and 40% strongly agreed) stated that being connected with peers as well as receiving help from instructors (85.6%–40% agreed and 44,29% strongly agreed) made up components of successful writing processes. These data indicated that participants held favorable beliefs about collaborative writing. The majority noticed the benefits of collaborative work while adopting the process approach to writing. This demonstrated that students' beliefs about the value of seeking help from others and interacted with peers to cultivate their knowledge potential and expertise were likely to have a positive effect on the outcomes. In the final item, students were asked if the reading materials available in English enabled them to improve their writing. In response to this question, a variety of students (86,14% - 35,71% agreed and 51,43% strongly agreed) claimed that reading of varied resources in English was advantageous for nurturing their writing.

Such results could allow the researcher to recognize that participants were in favor of using resources to compensate for their writing. This mindset may be closely tied to beliefs about compensating for writing strategies. These results indicated that most participants showed a good grasp of the compensating writing strategies that motivated them to make up for their writing deficiencies via those strategies, thereby provide them with alternatives to keep writing.

Precisely noted, the aforementioned evidence could let the researcher realize that the majority of the participants held positive beliefs about memory, cognitive, metacognitive, social and compensating writing strategies.

Students' Semi-Structured Interview :The data gathered from informants' interview pointed out the following themes :

In relation to the first interview question, the participants were asked about their overall awareness of writing strategies. Eight of them (ST1, ST2,ST3, ST4 , ST5, ST6, ST7, ST8) conveyed having limited awareness of these strategies, which they had indirectly acquired from past writing experiences and other language learning contexts. For instance, one of these respondents (S1) mentioned that her awareness of writing strategies was very little raised. She further noted that she had not received thorough instruction on these strategies during the writing courses she had undertaken in previous educational settings. While the remaining informant revealed no awareness about writing strategies as stated by (ST10) : “ I'm not aware of the writing strategies, teachers do not teach us these strategies” Nearly all participants displayed a little degree of writing strategies' awareness .

Regarding the second question, many factors surfaced as influential in directing participants' use of writing strategies. These factors comprised motivational drives, teachers' and peers feedback, previous knowledge, affordability and accessibility to resources, language proficiency, writing confidence and personal beliefs .

When asked about the possible influence of beliefs on their writing strategies, two informants(ST7,ST9) emphasized the key impact of their beliefs on their use of writing strategies . Six participants highlighted the value of strategic flexibility and adaptation in writing, wherein they tailored their tasks at hand by using appropriate strategies.

One informant stated that “students who believe that grammar and mechanics are the most important aspects that make a good writing, may spend a potential of time in revising their writing”. Interestingly, one informant admitted not offering any concern to the effect of his beliefs on his writing strategy use (ST8): “ It does not work, I do not consider this possible ”.

After being informed about the participants' level of strategy awareness, they were asked about the most frequent writing strategies they used. All respondents mentioned the integration of a range of strategies into their writing tasks , such as the use of dictionaries , brainstorming, outlining, and drafting(ST3, ST6, ST10), the use of technological devices and mind mapping (S7,S9), practicing listening and taking notes(ST1, ST4, ST5) . These strategies fall under the umbrella of compensation and cognitive strategies with some aspects potentially touching on metacognitive and affective writing strategies.

Following this line of thoughts, a question related to the motives behind using these strategies was asked for all the informants . Three respondents (S6, S9, S10) noted that the employed strategies worked out to be efficient and effective in organizing their thoughts and yielding to well-structured pieces of writing. The remaining informants' responses' were thematically linked to : taking risks, shaping the quality of their writing in particular and other language skills in general.

4.2 Discussion

The study's results highlighted the beliefs that Algerian EFL second-year students hold about their writing skills and their impact on their writing strategies . Students underlined the importance of writing for writing academic achievement and future career prospects ,but believed it as a difficult skill, denoted a level of complexity's awareness. They emphasized the need or analytical skills to effectively communicate ideas in writing and advocating for equal emphasis on writing alongside other language skills. Despite considering writing challenging, students understood its intricate nature, as evidenced by their reasons related to semantic and structural aspects. Studies(Evans & Green, 2007) support the notion that students find writing to be challenging .

The results showed a variety in students' beliefs about their writing. Firstly, 71.43% voiced some degree of satisfaction with their writing skills, either it was "very satisfied" or "satisfied." This implied that the majority of the participants felt confident about their writing proficiencies to varying degrees; they might have confidence in their abilities to efficiently generate ideas. However, the remaining participants reported being unsatisfied with their writing proficiency because of the possible challenges faced in previous tasks. They portrayed learners' profiles who might identify a gap between their current writing capacities and their looked-for level of proficiency .Being aware about the reasons behind their dissatisfaction could offer helpful insights into possible areas for development in instructional writing.

A spectrum of beliefs among participants regarding English writing and its challenges compared to other language skills has been brought to light. Particularly, there was a diversity of beliefs concerning the time commitment necessitated for writing in English, with some participants perceived it as demanding and a considerable effort while others believed that it was less time-consuming. Similarly, beliefs about the importance of writing in relation to other skills varied, reflecting a variety of beliefs about the value of writing proficiency. Added to this, participants held divergent beliefs about the difficult level of writing in English compared to other language skills, illuminating varying perceptions of the complexity related to writing tasks.

Moreover, some participants articulated the belief that writing was burdensome, alluding frequent anxieties and dissatisfactions related to English writing tasks. Many participants lined language forms up, such as grammar and mechanics, over conveying a message in their writing. This stressed on spelling, punctuation, and grammar advocated negative belief towards what writers should prioritize and aligns with the principles of the traditional approach to writing. However, this negated modern language learning approaches such as the communicative language learning approach and the process approach to writing, which spotlight content and meaning. This finding opposes Semke's (1984) research, which recommends that fixing on content first takes the lead to effective overall written work and supports the claims of scholars like Jordan (1997) who argues that structural aspects of writing are always prioritized by students.

Participants' beliefs about writing strategies were positive, with perception of the significant role these strategies play in promoting writing skills. They revealed beliefs about the importance of strategies such as planning, organizing, collaborating with others, and accessing extra resources and materials to ease their writing process. This displayed their understanding of some writing strategies and their impact on their writing proficiency. This implied that their beliefs influenced their choice and use of specific writing strategies.

However, this positive belief was challenged during interviews, where the majority of the students accentuated a moderate level of strategy's awareness, particularly regarding their technical terminology. It gave the impression that students' limited strategy awareness stemmed first from their lack of linguistic competence as they could not articulate the names of strategies they were using in their writing. Secondly, this might be possibly elucidated by the absence of explicit and implicit writing strategy instruction in the current English Language and syllabus design of the country. This observation was confirmed by participants' explanations for their lack of awareness while interviewing them and further supported by the absence of instructing writing strategies in academic language learning settings.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, this study investigated sophomores' beliefs and strategies about writing skills. To this end, two research instruments were used namely a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview .The data collected, analyzed and discussed revealed some significant findings regarding this concern. This comprises learners' recognition of the importance of writing for both their academic and professional success, with the majority reported satisfaction with their writing skills . However, a few noted specific areas requiring improvement . Students demonstrated differing beliefs about the time commitment , importance , and the degree of difficulty associated with writing in English compared with other language skills. Instead of concentrating on how to express oneself effectively in writing, participants focused on grammatical frameworks and other language components, reflecting traditional approaches to writing instruction. Although participants recognized the value of writing strategies such as planning, organizing and collaborating, they alienated a very limited awareness of these strategies .

Therefore, in light of these study's findings, the researcher suggests to recognizing and addressing any misunderstanding or restrictive beliefs students may hold about their writing skills. For the participants who valued language over content in their writing which could be generated from a belief that immaculate grammar is a crucial indicator of good writing . In these circumstances, the attention should be focused on communicating meaning efficiently , permitting students to understand language as a means to achieve objective(s) rather than an end in itself . Furthermore, self-reflection may assist students in detecting , analyzing and addressing any negative beliefs they may hold regarding their writing skills. Promoting students' growth mindset through aiding them to believe that their skills can be promoted through perseverance, such as planning, organizing, and communicating ideas. This assertion aligns with findings in efforts and learning from mistakes , to perceive challenges such as difficult writing assignments or receiving teachers' or peers feedback as opportunities and natural parts for development rather than overwhelming barriers and obstacles determining their low abilities .This mindset can boost students' motivation and commitment in refining their writing skills. Lastly, incorporating explicit instruction of writing strategies is more than desirable for supporting students' improvement as skilled and proficient writers. The researcher is aware that the study suffers from some limitations like investigating the issue from learners' perspective exclusively. It is advisable that further studies expose both students and teachers' perspectives to attain more valid results and draw more conclusions.

6. Figures and Tables

Table 1: Participants' profiles
The source: Done by the researcher

Participants' Number	Age group	Gender /Percentage	Period of studying English
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No	Statement	SDA	DA	UD	SA	A
4	I believe that students should not worry about spelling or grammar until they are satisfied they have covered all of their important themes in writing.	34,29%	18,57%	0%	25,71%	21.43%
5	I believe that to be a skilled writer, students need understanding common writing forms like descriptive, opinion, compare and contrast essays	15,56%	12.69	0%	30,78%	10.97%
6	I believe that Grammar is vital, but it isn't as crucial as the writer's purpose.	8.57%	22.86%	0%	40.00%	28.57%
7	I believe that grammar and mechanics (spelling and punctuation) are the most important aspects of successful writing.	8.57%	22.86%	2.86%	37.14%	28.57%
8	I believe that Students should proofread their work for both content and mechanical issues throughout revision.	7.14%	4,29	4,29	47,14	37,14

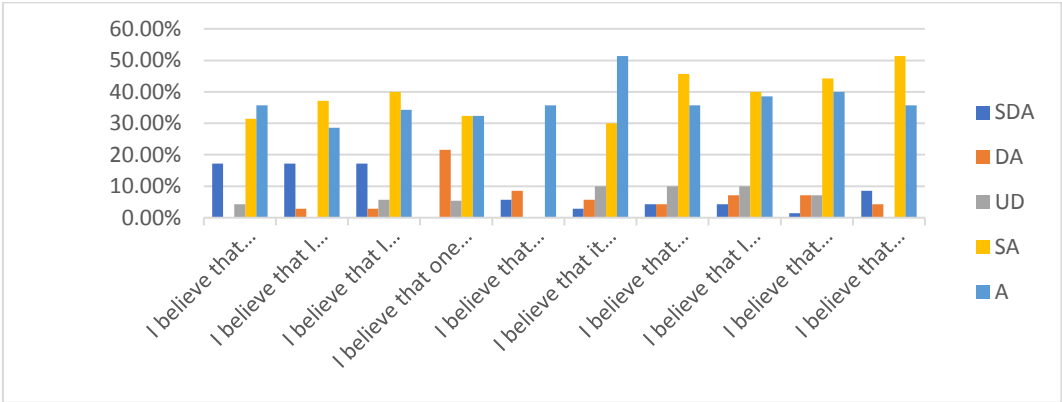


Figure 1 : The impact of participants' beliefs on their writing strategies
The source: Done by the researcher

7. Appendices

Students' Questionnaire

This questionnaire is prepared to gather information for a research on students' beliefs and practices about writing, in the Department of English, Blida2 university . Your replies will only be used for the study's purposes and will be kept private. Your identity will be kept hidden as well. Please read each item carefully and respond honestly

Dear students,

You are kindly requested to answer the questions, and tick in the right box(es). There are no right or wrong answers to these statements

We are much grateful to you for cooperation and help.

PART ONE:

a) Put a tick in the box (es) which correspond(s) to your answer.

b) If you need to say more, use the space provided (.....)

Male ☐ Female ☐

Age: 17-20 ☐ 20-30 ☐ More 30 ☐

Experience in learning English (number of years)

Part two: Writing in Relation to Academic Needs

4. In your opinion, the content of written expression module is:

Very Interesting ☐ Interesting ☐ a Little Interesting ☐ Not Interesting ☐

5. Do you think that writing is important in EFL university studies because:

- a- Knowing to write is absolutely necessary for the academic achievement of a language student
 - b- It will help you write research papers and thesis
 - c- It is a necessity in your future career
- Other reasons; please specify
-

6. Do you think that good writing is... (you can tick more than one box)

- a- Precise vocabulary ☐
- b- Good ideas ☐
- c – Correct grammar ☐
- d- Correct Spelling

Part two: Writing in Relation to Academic Needs

4. In your opinion, the content of written expression module is:

Very Interesting ☐ Interesting ☐ a Little Interesting ☐ Not Interesting ☐

5. Do you think that writing is important in EFL university studies because:

- a- Knowing to write is absolutely necessary for the academic achievement of a language student
 - b- It will help you write research papers and thesis
 - c- It is a necessity in your future career
- Other reasons; please specify
-

6. Do you think that good writing is... (you can tick more than one box)

- a- Precise vocabulary ☐
- b- Good ideas ☐
- c – Correct grammar ☐
- d- Correct Spelling

Other: please specify:

.....

7. Are you satisfied with your level of writing?

Very much satisfied ☐ Somewhat satisfied ☐ a Little satisfied ☐ Not satisfied ☐

8. If a little or not satisfied, please, explain why?

.....

- ❖ Please insert a tick mark () in the relevant box for each of the statements below to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement.

Part Three: Students' Beliefs about Nature and importance of Writing**1. Strongly disagree (SDA); 2. Disagree (DA); 3. Undecided (UD) 4. Agree (A) 5. Strongly agree (SA)**

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	I believe that writing in English is a time-consuming					
2	I believe that Writing is crucial and must be given same weight in the acquisition of English as other skills					
3	I believe that writing is more challenging than other skills of language learning.					

Part Four: Students' Beliefs about the Focus of Writing**1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Undecided 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree**

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
4	I believe that students should not worry about spelling or grammar until they are satisfied they have covered all of their important themes in writing.					
5	I believe that to be a skilled writer, students need understanding common writing forms like descriptive, opinion, compare and contrast essays					
6	I believe that Grammar is vital, but it isn't as crucial as the writer's purpose.					
7	I believe that grammar and mechanics (spelling and punctuation) are the most important aspects of successful writing.					
8	I believe that Students should proofread their work for both content and mechanical issues throughout revision.					

Part Five: Students' Beliefs about Writing Strategies**1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Undecided 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree**

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
10	I believe that writing necessitates understanding of the subject being written about.					
11	I believe that I should connect my background knowledge to the topic I'll be writing about.					
12	I believe that I should arrange information for my writing while I'm writing.					
13	I believe that one of the useful writing strategies is to create an outline.					
14	I believe that when writing, I should always use language that is appropriate for my topic.					
15	I believe that setting goals for my writing improves my ability to write.					
16	I believe that it would be beneficial if teachers provided me with a variety of tools for creating ideas, such as brainstorming, questioning,					

	visualizations, role-plays, and simulations.					
17	I believe that having talks with peers and teachers on ways to enhance one's writing ability is an excellent way to enhance my writing skills.					
18	I believe that I should collaborate with other students to improve my writing.					
19	I believe that during writing exercises, I should collaborate with the teacher.					
20	I believe that reading material written in English is beneficial to writing skills.					

Students Semi Structured Interview

1. How would you evaluate your overall awareness of writing strategies?
2. What are the primary factors that have influenced your use of writing strategies?
3. Do you think that your beliefs can affect your use of writing strategies?
 - 3.1. If yes, please explain how?
 - 3.2. If not, please say why?
4. In your writing, which writing strategies do you use most frequently?
5. For which purposes do you use these strategies?

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